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The Times Literary Supplement

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Contents

ART 59, BIBLIOGRAPHY 71, ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY 68, ENGLISH LITERATURE 66, FICTION 55-6, FRANCE 51-2, HISTORY 53, LITERATURE AND CRITICISM 65, NATURAL HISTORY 70, SCIENCE 69, SOCIAL HISTORY 67, SOCIAL STUDIES 58, SOUTH AFRICA 54, SPAIN 63-4, TRAVEL 57

- STEFAN COLLINI
Pierre Nora (Editor): *Les Lieux de mémoire, Volume One - La République; Volumes Two to Four - La Nation* 51-2
Ernst Engelberg: *Bismarck, Unpreuss und Reichsgründer* 53
Richard John Neuhaus: *Dispensations - The future of South Africa as South Africans see it* 54
Peter Lee: *Guard Her Children - Hope for South Africa today* 54
Joseph Hanlon: *Beggar Your Neighbours - Apartheid power in Southern Africa* 54
Joyce Carol Oates: *Marya - A life* 55
Vladimir Nabokov: *The Enchanter* 55
Milan Kundera: *Life is Elsewhere* 55
David Bradley: *The Chaneyville Incident* 56
John Edgar Wideman: *A Glance Away* 56
Chester Himes: *Lonely Crusade* 56
Joseph Roth: *Hotel Savoy* 56
Anne Devlin: *The Way-Paver* 56
Helena Drysdale: *Alone Through China and Tibet* 57
John Lowe: *Into China* 57
Alexander Fraser: *Beyond the Blue Horizon - On the track of Imperial Airways* 57
Andrew Eames: *Crossing the Shadow Line - Travels in South-East Asia* 57
John A. Thompson: *Manual of Curatorship - A guide to museum practice* 58
Jeffrey Hodge: *Wholly Unacceptable - The bitter battle for Sotheby's* 58
Rudolf Arheim: *New Essays on the Psychology of Art* 59
Prataditya Pal and Vidya Deheja: *From Merchants to Emperors - British artists and India 1757-1930* 59
Melissa McQuillan: *Impressionist Portraits* 59
Behind the lines 60
Author, Author 60
Letters on Wagner's Antisemitism, Rich and Poor in London, Bedtime Reading, etc 61
Fifty years on 61
Among this week's contributors 61
Commentary
Stephen Pollakoff: *Coming In To Land* (Lyttelton Theatre) 62
The Sacrifice (Lumière cinema) 62
Siegfried Sassoon (Hampstead Theatre) 62
Laurie Lee: *As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning* (BBC2) 62
Valentine Cunningham (Editor): *Spanish Front - Writers on the Civil War* 63-4
John Cornford: *Collected Writings*
Christopher Caudwell: *Scenes and Actions - Unpublished manuscripts, Collected Poems 1924-1936* 63-4
F. M. Otlet: *The Last Pharaoh*
Michel del Castillo: *The Disinherited* 64
Ruth Behar: *Santa María del Monte - The presence of the past in a Spanish village* 64
Nicholas Boyle and Martin Swales (Editors): *Realism in European Literature - Essays in honour of J. P. Stern*
Barbara Foley: *Tell the Truth - The theory and practice of documentary fiction* 65
John Frow: *Marxism and Literary History* 65
Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Machoski (Editors): *Fetter'd or Free? - British women novelists, 1670-1815* 66
Michael Cotsell: *The Companion to "Our Mutual Friend"*
Wendy S. Jacobson: *The Companion to "The Mystery of Edwin Drood"* 66
Charles Dickens: *The Pickwick Papers - Edited by James Kinsley* 66
Joan R. Kent: *The English Village Constable 1580-1642 - A social and administrative study* 67
Mervyn James: *Society, Politics and Culture - Studies in early modern England*
Barbara J. Harris: *Edward Stafford, Third Duke of Buckingham, 1478-1521* 67
Gale Owen-Crocker: *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England* 67
Gordon Donaldson: *Scottish Church History*
David George Mullin: *Episcopacy in Scotland - The history of an idea 1560-1638* 68
J. M. Hussey: *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* 68
Alexander Kohn: *Fals Prophets* 69
Sharon E. Kingsland: *Modelling Nature - Episodes in the history of populating ecology* 69
R. J. Berry and A. Hallam: *The Collins Encyclopedia of Animal Evolution*
Peter I. B. Slater: *The Collins Encyclopedia of Animal Behaviour*
Peter D. Moore: *The Collins Encyclopedia of Animal Ecology*
R. McNeill Alexander: *The Collins Encyclopedia of Animal Biology* 70
Peter Hayman, John Marchant and Tony Prater: *Shorebirds - An identification guide to the waders of the world* 70
Barry Gostor: *British Pyralid Moths - A guide to their identification* 70
Bettyann Kovits: *Females of the Species - Sex and survival in the animal kingdom* 70
David Thomas and Joyce Thomas: *Compton Mackenzie - A bibliography* 71
TLS Listings 71
Index of books reviewed 71
Cover picture
Irving Penn's "Man Lighting Girl's Cigarette" (Jean Patchett), New York, 1949, is reproduced from *Living Pair* by John Szarkowski (261 pp. New York: Museum of Modern Art; distributed in the UK by Thames and Hudson, £16.95, 0 5070 563 6). It is published to coincide with the exhibition of some 200 black-and-white photographs by Irving Penn which inaugurates the 20th Century Exhibition Gallery at the Victoria and Albert Museum, to be seen there until March 8.

Sources of remembrance

Stefan Collini

PIERRE NORA (EDITOR)
Les Lieux de mémoire
Volume One: *La République*
674 pp. 2 07 070192 1
Volumes Two to Four: *La Nation*
610 pp. 2 07 070658 3
662 pp. 2 07 070659 1
669 pp. 2 07 070794 6
Paris: Gallimard, 859 fr the set.

The date is May 21, 1981. The place is the Panthéon, in the heart of the Latin Quarter. The man is François Mitterrand. A photograph reproduced in the first of these volumes shows him ascending the steps with self-conscious dignity, flanked by a guard of honour. What is he doing? On the face of it, he may seem to be engaging in a piece of public ritual for which there would be recognizable equivalents in most modern states: the newly elected President inaugurates his term of office by paying homage at a shrine which traditionally represents the unity and continuity of his country. In this case, the frieze over the portico under which he is entering bears the legend "Aux Grands Hommes, la Patrie Reconnaissante", its resonant pomposity apparently expressing the kind of eirenic sentiment appropriate to such occasions.

But, as Mona Ozouf explains in a captivating essay on the Panthéon in the same volume, it is not quite as simple as that. In choosing, against all recent precedent, to hold this ceremony at the Panthéon, the Fifth Republic's first Socialist President was in fact re-opening an old debate about the sectarian, as opposed to national, significance of the concept of *les grands hommes* embodied in this gloomy monument. The limitations of the Panthéon as an expression of national consensus can be brought out by contrast with the ceremony that followed as Mitterrand crossed to the Right Bank of the Seine to be received by the Mayor of Paris, Jacques Chirac. At the Panthéon, Mitterrand evoked the spirit of the place by means of certain key representative figures: Carnot, embodiment of the citizen army of the Revolution; Hugo, celebrant of the suffering poor; Jaurès, the people's tribune; Jean Moulin, martyr of the Resistance - all radical, even populist, figures, a kind of Popular Front of Heroes, the great names who represent the claims of the anonymous masses. But across the river the presences summoned by M Chirac

were Sainte Geneviève and Sainte Jeanne d'Arc, Henri IV and General de Gaulle, none of whom is represented in the Panthéon. On one side, *les grands hommes*, on the other, saints and heroes; on the one side the Republic and the Revolutionary tradition; on the other, the monarchy (including republican monarchs) and Christianity. The great divide of modern French history is expressed in the resonances of this contrast. The paradox of the Panthéon is of a monument intended to embody the shared patriotic emotions of pride and gratitude, which has throughout the nearly two hundred years of its history obstinately retained a deeply partisan significance.

Ozouf's exploration of this paradox concentrates on the early history of the Panthéon (which, following a *mot* of André Billy, and evoking the traditionally radical intellectual élite of the nearby rue d'Ulm, she nicely refers to as "l'Ecole Normale des Morts"). She argues persuasively that we need to begin by recovering an understanding of what the cult of *les grands hommes* meant in the late eighteenth century. That conception was intended to exclude monarchs and the great chiefs of the aristocracy and even heroes in the conventional sense; *un grand homme* was likely, rather, to be a citizen of the Republic of Letters, a figure whose labours were solitary and extended, but whose achievements were recognized by his peers and who could be admitted to that timeless club whose cachet transcended even that of the most aristocratic of earthly institutions. Thus, as Ozouf points out, it was easy for the Revolution to appropriate this conception as "naturellement démocratique"; it represented the apotheosis of the ideal of "la carrière ouverte aux talents". But how to commemorate them? The eighteenth century had engaged in a prolonged debate about "l'efficacité pédagogique relative des différentes formes d'expression", but for the purposes of commemorating *les grands hommes* a privileged place came to be assigned to the statue, the pre-eminent art of "éducation civique". Ozouf touches interestingly on the way a recognizably Enlightenment sensibility was expressed in the preference for a lifelike statue, which creates an eternal presence, with the Great Man in characteristic pose, over a tomb or urn or other non-representational block of stone which serves as a conventional prompt to pious memory.

The eighteenth century's deliberations about establishing an "Élysée visible" were overtaken by the Revolution, so that when the idea

was once more revived in 1791 and the existing church of Sainte Geneviève selected for the purpose, the conception of who was to be carved into the memory naturally took a yet more radical turn. The decision to place Mirabeau, the first of the leading revolutionaries to die, among the pedestalled luminaries signalled that the Panthéon was about to become quite explicitly a monument to the Revolution (including those retrospectively press-ganged into its ranks like Voltaire and, improbably, Descartes). By linking the immortals of the Revolution not just to their putative French predecessors but to their ancient forebears - the self-conscious classicizing of the Revolution at one point led to the proposal to costume the statues, with Mirabeau "en Demosthène", and so on - the Panthéon could become, as Ozouf puts it, "le lieu d'une Révolution installée, éternisée... qui a oublié, ou voulu oublier, son histoire".

Ozouf then gives an elegant sketch of the ways in which the political complexion and historical self-description of each of the succeeding régimes in the nineteenth century were reflected in their handling of this sensitive site. The Revolution itself began the business by instituting rituals of "dépanthéonisation" for those who were no longer ideologically correct: appropriately, the first to suffer in this way was Mirabeau, whose statue left by a side-door as Marat's was carried in solemn procession through the main entrance. Almost from the start, therefore, what had been conceived as a shrine to that impartial harmony of qualities epitomized by *les grands hommes* was exploited to reinforce the legitimacy of a particular régime or faction, and where the eighteenth century had conceived of eternity as the appropriate time-frame for these exemplars of the human spirit, in practice many of the statues enjoyed a rather shorter life-span. Under Napoleon, the Panthéon reverted to being a Catholic church but also retained its role as a temple of national worthies; under the Restoration, it became simply a church again, and the frieze reverted to bearing an ecclesiastical inscription in Latin. The July Monarchy restored both civic inscription and secular function, but, by now predictably, the Second Empire removed both.

As in so many domains of French life (as these volumes bring out very forcefully) the Third Republic was the decisive period for the stabilization (or, more often, creation) of the official version of the memory of "La République radicale". The building itself was, as it

were, "panthéonisé" by being chosen as the setting for the massive display of republican theatre that was the funeral of Victor Hugo in 1885 (the subject of an interesting essay in its own right in the first volume); this provided the occasion for reverting to the inscription "Aux Grands Hommes", since when the form and function of the building have not substantially changed.

Some of the deep divisions within French society at the turn of the century continued to disturb its inmates, of course. In 1889 the family of the impeccably revolutionary general Hoche refused to let him be pantheonized on the grounds that he was unthinkable that he could lie in peace next to the remains of the opportunist Bonapartist general Carnot; in 1908 the descendants of Lannes were so outraged by the pantheonization of Zola that they demanded the right to carry off the ashes of their ancestor to lie amid more respectable company in Montmartre cemetery, and so on. These wrangles have become less common in the twentieth century, barring a notably heated controversy at the time of the Liberation, but even so it is clear that the gathering of *grands hommes* on the hill of Sainte Geneviève still does not constitute any kind of neutral or comprehensive national symbol. The Radical resonances of its identity as "l'Ecole Normale des Morts" can only have been reinforced by the pointed privilege of the Socialist President.

However, as Ozouf observes in her conclusion, it is extremely unlikely that the Panthéon could ever engage our political emotions in the way it once did. This is partly, she suggests, because we have become more sceptical about the whole notion of the *grand homme*, who, in his blameless labours for human welfare, embodies those universal qualities of the human spirit which will inevitably lead to a better society. But it is even more because we no longer believe in the educative power of such public monuments. The material expression of the cult of *les grands hommes* presupposed a faith in "la solidarité spontanée de l'esthétique et de la morale, dans la nécessaire docilité du public à la leçon des sens et dans l'efficacité d'un art pédagogique". With the decline of this conviction, the Panthéon is becoming more and more a memorial to memory itself; the collective ardour which responded to the propaganda of stone has cooled, and, in Gibbonian vein, one observes that its chill, gloomy spaces are only disturbed by the uncomprehending chatter of citizens of Atlanta and Osaka.

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I have dwelt so long on this one essay not only because it is a very fine piece of historical writing on an interesting subject, but also because so many of the contributions to *Les Lieux de mémoire* are, like Ozouf's, "essays" in the best sense, extended meditations or explorations that are not easily reducible to a briefly stated argument. The character of the whole collection is therefore probably better represented by attempting to convey something of the intellectual subtlety and cultural range of one particular piece rather than by providing a series of one-sentence summaries. But the variety and richness of these volumes also have to be signalled, however baldly.

To begin with, the sheer scale of the enterprise is impressive. Four volumes, over 2,600 pages, more than 470 illustrations, seventy essays, some sixty contributors, among them most of the leading French historians – and Part Three, to be entitled *Les Francs* and comprising one or two volumes, is yet to come. Then, the fine quality of design and production puts most British publishers to shame, or would if they seemed at all susceptible to that emotion. On a broader front, the very existence of these volumes, full of writing by distinguished scholars that has neither withdrawn into professional inaccessibility nor, with one or two exceptions, become the willing victim of trend and jargon, might be taken as a sign of a notable vitality in this area of French intellectual life, the reports of whose death have been greatly exaggerated following the nearly simultaneous disappearance of the famous *maîtres à penser* of the 1960s and 1970s. In more immediate terms, the credit for this impressive enterprise belongs to Pierre Nora, who is a walking *conjoncture culturelle* in himself. In his professional role as editorial director at the house of Gallimard he has been responsible for initiating and overseeing the whole project, while, wearing his hat as a trained historian and Directeur d'Études at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, he has also contributed three learned essays to these volumes as well as an elegant introduction and conclusion to each part (lest time should hang heavy on his hands he is also editor of the general cultural review, *Le Débat*).

In one respect, the title of this collection may give a misleading impression of the range of its contents. Neither term should be taken too literally. The Pantheon, it is true, is a "site" in the literal sense, and so are "Le Mur des Fédérés" (treated with great brio by Madeleine Réberlioux), "Les Monuments aux morts" (Antoine Prost), "Reims, ville du sacré" (Jacques Le Goff), and several others. But the majority of the essays deal with symbols or moments or books which are not historical monuments in this literal sense. In the first volume, there are fascinating pieces on, for example, the *Tricolore* (Raoul Girardet), "La Marseillaise" (Michel Vovelle), and "Les Centenaires de Voltaire et de Rousseau" (Jean-Marie Goulemot and Eric Walter), while the three volumes making up *La Nation* range even more widely (the subject does not, after all, bring with it the same chronological constraints as does *La République*), embracing pieces on representations of the countryside, conceptions of the national boundaries, ideas of the national heritage, expressions of the taste for glory, embodiments of the tyranny of the word, and so on.

Nor should "memory" be construed too narrowly, especially since Nora explains in his introduction to the collection that as used here it goes beyond mere "recollection" and includes "forgetting" also. "Memory" in this sense is not to be equated with "history", which is something more precise and locatable, grounded in evidence and subject to correction: memory as treated here is more a matter of associations, allusions, symbols. It is the collective semi-consciousness. It is popular to the extent that it is part of a common culture, not something that is the arcane preserve of a professional group; but it is far from popular in the sense in which the term "popular culture" is used now (it may be another interesting sign of the way the intellectual breeze is blowing among French historians that so much of this collection is devoted to what has often been referred to in recent years, with pejorative intent, as "high culture"). So the terms of the title ought rather to suggest a very heterogeneous set of sources of resonance, rather

than an inventory of historic monuments. At the same time, this does not mean that these volumes contain any very sustained enquiry into the ways the past operates in the consciousness of the present; this is not a survey of contemporary attitudes. Instead, they offer a series of historical explorations of the ramifications of the major (and some of the minor) evocations of the past in French life, where that past includes the ways in which the symbols involved have come to have an effective reality of their own.

In his introduction to the volumes on *La Nation*, Nora makes some large claims for the novelty and significance of the kind of "history of symbolism" represented here. In fact, the approaches preferred by most of his contributors will seem perfectly familiar to Anglo-Saxon cultural and intellectual historians (and are none the worse for that); the greatest novelty lies in the highly imaginative selection of topics and their juxtaposition, and in the perceptiveness of the contributors. In another respect, these volumes may be seen as symptomatic of a more general reassertion of the independence of the "political" at the expense of the "social" in French intellectual life: in their central themes, such as questions of political identity and nation-building, no less than in their unapologetic concentration on the activities of exceptionally articulate members of the educated class, these volumes would probably have been dispraised as old-fashioned fifteen or twenty years ago. As Nora remarks with tangible satisfaction: "L'histoire 'totale' s'était définie contre l'histoire politique et son étroitesse. Et voici que le politique resurgit comme l'instrument d'une histoire plus englobante encore."

A recurring motif of the collection is the way in which institutions or symbols which are sectarian in their origins become in time national possessions. This is particularly well brought out in the first volume, since of course initially, and recurrently through the nineteenth century, the republican tradition represented but one half of a divided nation. However, the opening decades of the Third Republic saw a concerted and in some ways successful attempt to identify republicanism with Frenchness itself, and the years between 1875 and 1895 provide the effective chronological focus of this volume. The early Third Republic (sometimes referred to as "La République des Professeurs") was a self-consciously pedagogic régime, attentive to the variety of ways of teaching the inhabitants of the Hexagon that they were French and that they were citizens, two novel notions that could still, as has been amply demonstrated by the work of Eugen Weber and Theodore Zeldin, be regarded with suspicion by peasants in the more remote parts of the country. At a symbolic level, the years between the century of the deaths of Voltaire and Rousseau in 1878 and the anniversary of the Revolution in 1889 were marked by several significant steps in the Republic's consolidation of its position. In 1879 the "Marseillaise" became the national anthem, in 1880 the Fourteenth of July was decreed to be *La Fête de la Nation* and the seat of Parliament was transferred from Versailles to Paris, and so on.

This process of the installation of the heritage of the Revolution as the essence of the national tradition is illuminated from an unusual angle in the essay on the centenaries of Voltaire and Rousseau: in 1878, with the new Republic's anti-clerical campaign gathering momentum, Voltaire still evoked violently partisan feelings. It is also illustrative of belief in "the power of the word", another recurrent theme of these volumes, that there was an official proposal to distribute free copies of his selected works, on the grounds that "quand il y a un Voltaire dans chaque famille, les églises se vidèrent". His centenary was turned into a Republican carnival, with Hugo wheeled out to claim that the Enlightenment and the Revolution represented the true France; Catholics held counter-celebrations in memory of Jeanne d'Arc.

Thereafter, however, as Goulemot and Walter bring out splendidly, the sectarian exploitation of both Voltaire and Rousseau tended to give way to a more consensual invocation of their national status as great writers, "magiciens de la langue, investis de la mission d'incarner face au monde le génie

universel de la France". By 1912, the bicentenary of Rousseau's birth, all parties except "Action Française" could join in the government-led homage to this hero of *la culture française*, and when in 1944 the Liberation coincided with the 250th anniversary of Voltaire's birth, the celebrations drew enthusiastic support not only from all shades of political opinion but also from self-conscious representatives of the national heritage such as the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Comédie-Française. As Goulemot and Walter observe: "Au prix de mille ambiguïtés, l'unanimité de la célébration veut dire la patrie retrouvée et restaurée, les Français réunis et réinscrits, par l'héritage littéraire, dans une Nation fraternelle."

In his conclusion to the first volume, Nora ruminates interestingly on the outcome of this process. Once the point had been reached where a conservative general supported by a right-wing party could present himself as the living embodiment of *La République*, it became harder to think of "La République radicale" as still having any effective mobilizing power in the party-political contest. The failure of Vichy may have discredited the anti-republican tradition for good. Those overlapping totalities of State, Nation and Society all now seem viable and sufficient in their own right, and the presence of *La République* in the consciousness of the citizen of modern France, concludes Nora, is above all as "un lieu de mémoire". Although this is true enough in one sense, it is a claim which perhaps needs to be treated a little sceptically or even to be seen as a polemical move in itself. While it is true that the republic is no longer faced with a serious challenge from any rival form of polity, the capacity of the republican *idea* and its history to stir the passions still seems to the outsider to retain a remarkable vitality. The approaching bicentenary of the Revolution remains, after all, a highly charged and politically contested event.

For all kinds of reasons, *La Nation*, unlike *La République*, can hardly be expected to disappear by assimilation, not least because it was both more and less than a doctrine or régime in the first place. Inevitably, an exploration of its "sites of memory" will be more diffuse, as is also indicated by its expansion into three stout tomes. But although these volumes do not have such a definite organizing theme as their predecessor, it is noticeable that they, too, have an unannounced chronological focus. Where the essays in the previous volume constantly return to the early years of the Third Republic, in *La Nation* they go back time and again to the Restoration and the July Monarchy. The modern idea of the French nation was largely a creation of the Romantic enthusiasms of the historiography of the 1820s and 1830s. Of the leading historians of that period, only Augustin Thierry receives a separate essay to himself (a theoretically sophisticated if somewhat wordy performance by Marcel Gauchet); the omission of his more prominent rivals, Guizot and Michelet, is defended on the grounds that their presence in these volumes is pervasive. Nora notes with satisfaction that Guizot "reprend ici sa figure centrale de grand organisateur de la mémoire", while Michelet, more extravagantly still, is hailed as "l'âme" of the whole book, a figure "qui transcende tout lieu de mémoire possible". In this, as well as in some less direct ways, these volumes may reflect and contribute to the largely favourable reevaluation of the liberal historians and political theorists of this period which seems to be taking place in French intellectual life at the moment.

For all the variety of topics and treatment in these volumes, the standard still seems to be remarkably high (though it is hard not to cavil at some of the rather simplistic notions about the history of education in Britain evident in Daniel Milo's otherwise informative essay on "Les Classiques scolaires"). The choice of topics is, if anything, even more admirably imaginative. In *La Nation*, then, in the first volume, the most ritualized pattern of "La Visite au Grand Écrivain", for example, yields some interesting material for Olivier Nora. Another far from obvious topic is treated in Jean-François Sirinelli's essay on the institution known as *la Khâgne*, the class, usually at one of the crack Parisian lycées, of an

additional year or two's study after the baccalauréat for that small group preparing for the competitive entrance examination for l'École Normale Supérieure or other grandes écoles. Sirinelli makes many interesting suggestions about the influence of this formative experience on the French intellectual élite, not least in its transmission of a very conservative notion of "culture générale" against which so much of the self-conscious iconoclasm of recent years can be seen as a reaction.

In his conclusion to the last of these volumes, Nora remarks that it would require comparisons with the formation of the national memory in other countries really to bring out the distinctiveness of the French experience. Certainly, the English reader is bound to reflect that they remember these things differently in France. As one starts to imagine what a comparable collection by English historians would look like, some obvious contrasts leap to the mind's eye. Not only, of course, could there be no equivalent volume to that on *La République*, but it is hard to see what might be substituted in the British case. "The Kingdom" would be vacuous for the parallel period of modern history: there would be plenty of ceremonial and symbolism to study (much of it, as David Cannadine has pointed out, invented in the late nineteenth century), but even though the monarchy has enjoyed an increasingly wide popularity in this century, it could not be said that English life has been significantly informed by "monarchical values". Some unwieldy abstraction like "the representative system" might come a bit nearer the mark: it can boast a stirring long pedigree, some great historical moments, a bit of civic ritual, and a few resonant slogans, as well as that great spur to historical awareness, a current decline. Yet it would all seem a bit strained: the anniversary of the passing of the Great Reform Bill is an unlikely candidate for a national holiday, and old ballot-boxes make dull shrines.

Some may find in this further evidence to support the now-familiar complaint that in Britain we suffer from what might be called a "National Trust" model of political memory, which muffles the sound of conflicts in our political history by admitting only those episodes and individuals that can be spoken of with the proper Dimbleby-in-the-Abbey reverence. More fundamentally, one is led back to the unoriginal conclusion that many of these political symbols retain a greater resonance in France than in Britain because French history has been so much more overtly and fundamentally divided than that of Britain in the last two centuries. As Nora nicely observes: "Le paradoxe de l'histoire nationale française a été de localiser sa continuité essentielle dans ce qui, par nature, est le moins continu, la politique." So, where Marianne is on the barricades, an exposed nipple pointing the way to a contested future, Britannia is sedately seated, perhaps a co-opted member of some *ad hoc* committee. We exaggerate the contrast, however, by concentrating on political topics: one could imagine a no less rich collection of essays on the sources of the English "national memory" by shifting the attention to literature or the countryside or even sport.

But, comparisons apart, we have to recognize that for all the disinterested or even elegiac tone in which the essays in *Les Lieux de mémoire* treat some of the most fundamental divisions in French history, they represent further instalments in a continuing debate, and not its closure. After all, it was the Pantheon that Mitterrand chose to visit: *la lutte continue*.

Cross-References: *Modern French theory and the practice of criticism*, edited by David Kelley and Isabelle Lasera (192pp. Society for French Studies, £12. 0 904008 09 6) is a collection of papers delivered at a colloquium organized in 1984 by the Cultural Department of the French Embassy in London. The contributions include "Critique et éthique: à propos de Maurice Blanchot" by Tzvetan Todorov, "Les négations de Derrida" by Marjorie Hobson, "The Novelists and the Critic" by Gabriel Josipovici, "A Semiotic of Semiotics" by John Sturrock and an account by A. S. Byatt of her attempt to write a novel without metaphors.

The iron squireen

Norman Stone

ERNST ENGELBERG
Bismarck, Urpreuss und Reichsgründer
856pp. Berlin: Siedler. DM48.
38860 1217

In 1843, at the age of twenty-eight, Bismarck wrote his first journalistic article. It was about the protection of the Junkers' hunting-rights; it presumably went down well with the prissy Ultras in the Pomeranian countryside, who were Bismarck's friends at the time: a few years later, their patronage enabled him to take his first political part, as reactionary spokesman in Prussia's earliest, stumbling effort at parliament. Thirty years further on, and Bismarck had broken completely with the Prussian conservatives. He had unified Germany, but they did not like him for it. True, he had in the process preserved a miraculous amount of old Prussia, but the Junkers themselves had lost legal and manorial privileges on the way.

The Junkers in Prussia have had a very bad press in Britain, and their conduct from 1870 onwards was not deserving of any other. They opposed all sensible reforms; even at the very end, in November 1918, with the world crashing about their ears, they were still imposing a veto on universal and equal suffrage in Prussia; and their role before the rise of Hitler was parasitical and treacherous. Germany did not succeed in developing a moderate conservative party on British lines until after 1945. There were indeed noblemen and clergymen who wanted to establish one, but they got next to nowhere. The history of modern Germany is littered with rump-parties with such names as *Volkskonservativ* or *Christlich-Sozial*; they rated few seats in parliaments, and usually collapsed in back-biting. German conservatives got Bismarck instead.

It comes as a surprise to learn that Bismarck belonged to the Junker order. But that order, after 1870, was changed. It included a great many people who were only second or third generation on the land, who had bought their way into east Elbian land and frequently took the same narrow view of their interests as South African Boers or, for that matter, some of the new landowners in post-famine Ireland. The Junkers of an earlier era were a different matter, and Bismarck belonged there. The great merit of Ernst Engelberg's *Bismarck: Urpreuss und Reichsgründer* is that he has spent a quarter of it discussing this subject, with new family material at his disposal.

Bismarck belonged to the world of eighteenth-century rationalism, slightly but not very basically shaken by Romanticism. As Engelberg shows, the Bismarcks had made a name for themselves earlier on – though royal favour from Berlin had counted for far more than any endeavours in "early-modern capitalism". Even at the height of his triumph, in 1871, Bismarck took time off to write lengthily about this, saying how pleased he was to have restored the family fortunes through the gifts of a grateful Monarch and State. He was well educated (though he loathed his school's "artificial Spartanism") and very widely read; far from being a narrow-minded squireen he could handle several languages (including Polish) and knew his Beethoven. Engelberg shows

that Bismarck's mother, though supposed to have been a bourgeoisie of the Enlightenment, in reality came from a background of similar Court service. She was a cold, disappointed woman who drove Bismarck on with his homework, but none of that was surprising in the then Junker class: in those days Prussian education, bureaucracy and reform plans made the running in the Enlightenment and Königsberg was one of Europe's centres of excellence.

Religion – again it is a merit of Engelberg's book to have shown this – played an important part in Bismarck's later youth. To begin with, he was a sceptic. This went together with dreadful debts, and an inability to know what to do next. He drifted, and took up farming – he was quite good at it – trotting round talking to the peasants in Polatt-Deutsch (though Bismarck the Inspector of Dykes is almost as unimaginable as Lloyd George the raspberry farmer). In that world, he was dependent for company on the local country squires, a suffocating collection of von Thadden-Trieglaffs, von Below-Hohendorf, von Senff-Pilsachs; but a daughter of the Thadden-Trieglaffs introduced him to Pietism, and the accident of this platonic affair gave Bismarck his launch into reactionary politics.

Their connections at Court were used to good effect, and Bismarck arrived there as the kind of reactionary who could embarrass his friends. The rest is now very well-known – Bismarck's move in the mid-1850s, away from Throne and Altar, towards *kleindeutsch* nationalism, and towards accommodation with the liberals, is recorded in Engelberg's reasonable narrative, but he does not have much to add to the established biographies (Lothar Gall's *Wesels Revolutionär* is about to appear in English and so is Thomas Nipperdey's *Deutsche Geschichte 1800-1866*, both of them much more stimulating than Engelberg's book). As an Anglo-Saxon reader, I prefer A. J. P. Taylor's book, which is shorter and much more entertaining; it also brings out a side of Bismarck that does not appear in Engelberg's pages, that he was a man of considerable charm and had the nearly unique gift, among German statesmen, of being funny.

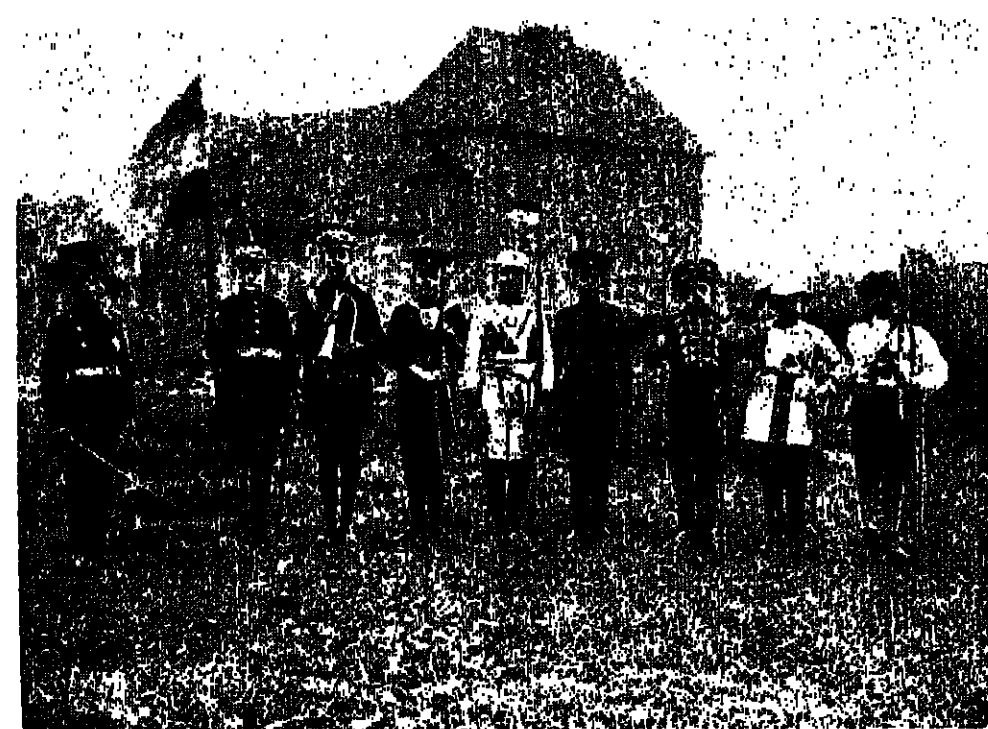
Engelberg's book has had a good reception in West Germany, no doubt because it is yet another sign that the East Germans are being allowed to rediscover their past. Certainly, Engelberg's strength lies in his purely historical understanding of the Pomeranian and east Elbian world of the 1840s; in fact, though he is a highly placed East German historian (with an impeccable record of anti-Nazi behaviour) the Marxism of his book is so restrained as to constitute something of a disappointment. Workers and peasants appear, but in an oddly shortened way, rather as if the author had exercised self-censorship; it is not even very rude about German Liberals. They, with great reluctance, accepted Bismarck and the Prussian army, calculating that once Prussia had achieved German unification it would become a less intolerable place because parliamentary institutions would enforce reform. They preferred to wait, postponing *Freiheit* for the sake of *Einheit*. Bismarck, on his side, calculated that the Prussian problem could only be solved if he conquered Germany. "Der Weg ging in die preussische Form des Bonapartismus", says Engelberg – an expansionist alliance of army and property, though Bismarck was a much more interesting man than Napoleon.

Volume Two of *Documents Diplomatiques Suisses, 1848-1945*, edited by Roland Ruffieux (760pp. Berne: Bantell. 3 7165 0496 3) covers the period from January 1, 1886, to February 24, 1872. The attention to detail and the luxury of the production have the hall-mark "made in Switzerland" all over them. There is an excellent index but there is also an analytic table of contents which divides all the documents under main headings and then summarizes the contents of each, enabling one to isolate important reports within a matter of seconds.

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between the Papacy and the House of Savoy, in Italy. For Switzerland they were years of crisis and threat. The Swiss government had to extend its diplomatic activity and to begin to abandon the casual style of its previous relations with the Great Powers. At several points experienced Swiss observers expected a general European war among the four powers which shared borders with Switzerland. On the other hand the neutral standing of Switzerland gave its ministers in foreign capitals a certain detachment which makes their reports still read compellingly more than a century later. Volume Three in the series, covering the period from January 1, 1873, to December 31, 1889, was published in 1986 (995pp. Berne: Bantell, 3 7165 0553 4).

Jonathan Steinberg



Cologne schoolboys celebrating the Kaiser's birthday, 1915: one of Sander's 431 photographs in August Sander: Citizens of the Twentieth Century. Portrait photographs 1892-1952, edited by Günther Sander, with text by Ulrich Keller, translated by Linda Keller (431pp. MIT Press. £54.95. 0262 19248 9).

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That never have spoken yet

Edward Norman

RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS
Dispensations: The future of South Africa as
South Africans see it
317pp. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. £14.95.
08028 3627 5
PETER LEE
Guard Her Children: Hope for South Africa
today
256pp. Eastbourne: Kingsway. Paperback.
£2.50.
086065 4273

There is a kind of "steady state" of injustice in the world: as soon as one set of grievances is cleared away, social values change and human expectations shift and a whole new batch is lined up. In South Africa the idea of separating the races occurred to nineteenth-century missionaries as a device for preserving the blacks from corrupting contact with white culture. In the later years of the century, and in correspondence with the racial and linguistic nationalism let loose in European countries at the time - Ireland is a good example - the Afrikaners seized upon separate development and gave it an ideological basis. In their hands it was as much directed against the "corrupting" consequences of contact with the Saxon culture of the English-speaking imperial connection as it was a denial of the values of black society. The Afrikaners rose to power too late; not until the 1940s were they able to enshrine their, by then, hopelessly dated concepts of racial control in law. That is the problem of South Africa: it is an old-fashioned country whose ordinary internal evolution would anyway, at some point in the future, have discovered the incompatibilities and practical injustices of apartheid, but where time and external opinion have run ahead of them. There is now, within the present terms of reference, no solution to the problem of the racial and cultural mixture, and South Africans themselves wait for some cataclysmic event to move the pieces around the board. Perhaps after the next shift of expectations the terms of reference will allow a reasoned outcome.

In religious life, too, South Africa has lagged behind most of the Western world. It is one of those areas which disprove the easy assumption that urbanization and secularization go hand in hand. For the great cities of the Republic have, during the past half-century, seen astonishing developments of the Churches - particularly in the black independent sects. But the voices of religion have not been especially noted for radical social critiques, except in the highly specialized and very untypical cases of the Christian Institute (banned in 1977) and the South African Council of Churches. Both of those represented the opinions of disaffected white progressives and a tiny fringe of educated urban blacks. They have had an overseas influence out of all proportion to their real significance. One of the difficulties in judging the situation in South Africa is precisely that the available sources are, indeed, so untypical. This is not due to any act of censorship by government but to two other facts. One is the external financing of the radical churchmen in the Council of Churches, which also allows their voice to be a major source of information on internal events of all kinds. The other is the cultural submergence of the largest part of black society: the blacks seen on television screens throughout the world are the English-speaking, urban, educated and articulate men and women who are quite unlike the blacks in general - who live in rural areas and do not speak English at all. That does not mean, of course, that the opinions or diagnoses of the political situation made by the urban élites are to be discounted. On the contrary, revolutions are usually the work of a minority, otherwise it is hardly necessary to have a revolution at all, because pressure for change will derive more evenly from a broad consensus. But it does raise problems for observers - like the two churchmen whose books are here considered - who seek a balanced view of the aspirations of the whole of black South Africa.

Richard John Neuhaus is a distinguished American commentator on public issues, and his book, *Dispensations: The future of South Africa as South Africans see it*, as one would expect, is a balanced and sane as it can be in

the circumstances. Like the work by Peter Lee, *Guard Her Children: Hope for South Africa today*, it assumes structural injustice as a baseline, and proceeds through a familiar catalogue of names (Beyers Naudé, Allan Boesak, Desmond Tutu etc) to probe the opinions of the hidden black majority. There, however, both books stop. Neither author really gets any further: there are no examinations of the views of the black cultic leaders (who now head a third of black Christian congregations) or of the black rural communities (80 per cent of the black population). Here the reader is shown the urban élite again, and, in both cases, it is well done. Pastor Neuhaus is especially careful in weighing evidence to produce fair assessments. His hero, Naudé, emerges as "perhaps the only white man in South Africa whom revolution-minded blacks carry in procession on their shoulders". It is Naudé who once said - intending to be dismissive, but in fact describing the nature of the European and American clergy to whom he was ultimately addressing himself - that the trouble with the Afrikaner ministers was that "they get their theology from the Afrikaans newspapers". In Neuhaus's book Archbishop Tutu appears as a marginal figure, lauded by the West but left behind by the turn of events in South Africa. At the centre, indeed, there is a black hole: all the radicalized blacks claim Nelson Mandela as their prophet and leader, yet they are bitterly divided internally, between various brands of Marxism, or anarchism, and by ethnic pre-

Trying for instability

Arthur Sheps

JOSEPH HANLON
Beggar Your Neighbours: Apartheid power in Southern Africa
352pp. Currey, in collaboration with the Catholic Institute for International Relations.
£25 (paperback, £8.95).
085255 3072

Joseph Hanlon's book examines the way South Africa has exercised its power throughout the southern African region since the disappearance of the cordon sanitaire of colonial or minority-ruled regimes. The book studies South Africa's relations with nearly all the states which comprise the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC): Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. (Tanzania, a member of SADCC, is not included in Dr Hanlon's study because there seems little evidence of South African economic power or influence there.) It is Hanlon's argument that these states have borne the brunt of a struggle greater than any yet waged inside South Africa itself. Since the foundation of SADCC in 1980, this struggle, it is estimated, has cost South Africa's neighbouring states 100,000 lives and \$10,000 million.

South Africa, according to Hanlon, seeks to use its neighbouring states as a barrier against both sanctions and black majority rule. Their economic dependence on South Africa is assiduously cultivated by Pretoria. For South Africa the reasons are partly political: dependence and destabilization allow South Africa to mute criticism of its apartheid system, to show that "black rule does not always work efficiently and to threaten that sanctions will hurt its neighbours as well as itself. South Africa, however, is defending not only its racial and political system, but also its economy. One of the virtues of this book is that it reminds us that South Africa, like India or Brazil, is a newly industrialized society just emerging from "third world" economic status. The neighbouring states are part of a vital "home" market in the process of South African development.

South African policy towards its neighbours is grounded in the conviction that it has to resist what it perceives as a Moscow-directed "total onslaught" against apartheid and, ultimately, "Western" or Christian values in Africa. South Africa's response in the 1970s was a "total strategy" which included a plan to develop a Constellation of States of southern Africa (CONSAS), led by South Africa, which would acknowledge the reality of the alleged Marxist "total onslaught" against the fundamental of



Nyassa miners going home after serving their twelve-month contract on a gold-mine, 1952: a detail reproduced from *Lifetimes: Under apartheid with text by Nadine Gordimer and sixty-four photographs by David Goldblatt* (115pp. Cape. £15. 022402870).

judices, and the Mandela they know is the Mandela of speeches made a quarter of a century ago. The poor man himself is probably better off in gaol. To be loose among those warring factions, each one of which claims him for their own, would be horrific.

The Revd Peter Lee's book is better than it looks at first glance. Beneath the casual vulgarity of his written style - he read history at Cambridge in the later 1960s - this Anglican clergyman actually projects some very balanced alternative explanations of the South African dilemma. He is at the same time, however, a little too respectful of some of the components. Thus the miraculous vision of "Bill" Burnett, General Secretary of the South

African Council of Churches, Bishop of Grahamstown, and eventually Archbishop of Cape Town. The event occurred in 1972, when "Bishop Bill" was recovering, with "his usual gin and tonic", from celebrating Holy Communion. Suddenly he "found himself firmly urged" to go to his chapel, which, he said, he "didn't normally do in the middle of the day". By his own account, he then told God "to take the initiative", and "clearly heard the words, 'I want your body'". Later God said to him, "Take political action and take the consequences." Burnett recalls himself as replying "OK". The case for the blacks taking over in South Africa grows stronger with each revelation.

Bantustans within South Africa, accept the permanence and even legitimacy of some form of apartheid, and deny any aid or comfort to the African National Congress (ANC).

The creation of SADCC and the re-emergence of ANC activities within the black townships of South Africa, in 1980-81, dashed Pretoria's dream of a coherent South African-led regional policy. Since then, Hanlon's book argues, South African policy towards its neighbours has been characterized by the kind of destabilizing actions which are currently being directed most noticeably against Zimbabwe and Zambia. South Africa has combined the maintenance of the maximum possible links and dependency with measures of destabilization and retaliation. The past several years have also seen a continuing incidence of cross-border raids and the support of rebel groups, especially in Angola and Zimbabwe, which serve as surrogate South African armies. The intention is to replace the old cordon sanitaire with a cordon of instability. The neighbours, thus, would be too concerned with their own problems to threaten apartheid, to become less dependent, or, now, to help make proposed international sanctions effective.

The central portion of *Beggar Your Neighbours: Apartheid power in Southern Africa* consists of essays by Hanlon and a number of his colleagues on the individual SADCC countries. Here they reveal a sensitivity and awareness of the subtle differences which dictate the degree of resistance to South Africa's policies that the various countries can afford. There is a tendency in some Western circles to dismiss Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland as South African satellites or to equate them with the "homelands". In this book they are correctly treated as countries which South Africa takes seriously as independent and, therefore, potentially threatening states. It is true that these three have not found it possible to dissociate themselves from a customs or monetary union with South Africa, the benefits of which are not clear. And Swaziland had to agree to a secret non-aggression pact with South Africa. But it shares this distinction with supposedly more radical former Portuguese colonies, and it has not been spared South African raids.

The threat of SADCC to South Africa is complex. The SADCC countries have recently displayed more buoyancy than South Africa itself. An economically independent region, especially one which attracts a growing level of foreign interest and trade, would be more difficult to dominate. Food, fuels, some minerals and particularly regional transportation and communication services are precisely the areas where SADCC has realized

that it has to develop its own capacities. Economic de-linking would deprive South Africa of an essential market. Moreover, destabilization is disliked by South African businesses, which would prefer sound, regular and untroubled relations with its neighbours.

Despite all South African pressures none of the neighbouring states has been really cowed. No state has recognized the Bantustans, which form the cornerstone of apartheid. ANC or other refugees are not returned to South Africa. SADCC is continuing to grow in regional and international economic importance. In any event, the real strength and, hence, threat of the ANC and the United Democratic Front lie within South Africa itself.

Beggar Your Neighbours, in its final chapters and in its useful documentary and statistical appendices, examines what the cost would be for SADCC of dissolving all its economic links with South Africa, what the consequences of sanctions against South Africa would be for its immediate neighbours, and what Western aid and development policies should be. There is, the author notes, no single or right answer to the question of whether or how the neighbouring states can use their links with South Africa to their own advantage. Certainly, if sanctions end these links, new markets will have to be found for many locally produced goods; and international tourism will have to replace South African holiday-makers. But, arguably, SADCC products could compete favourably with most of the ones which South Africa now contrives to provide. And as a supplier South Africa does not always offer its neighbours the best deal.

Other countries which currently favour sanctions, such as The Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Canada and those in Scandinavia, should be able to satisfy some of the area's food and fuel requirements. Australia has realized that it can become an important player politically and economically in the region. And, locally, Zimbabwe's growing industrial sector can meet some regional needs.

If there are really tight sanctions against South Africa, development assistance programmes in the SADCC countries might have to absorb enormous numbers of migrant workers who could be expelled from South Africa. But the loss of South African markets, supplies, currency and trading agreements might produce a healthy readjustment. And those Western countries which provide the goods, credit, trade links and the technology for transportation and agricultural development might benefit along with these southern African countries themselves.

First throb of the enchanted hunter

Alan Jenkins

VLADIMIR NABOKOV
The Enchanter
Translated by Dmitri Nabokov
127pp. Picador. £8.95.
0330 296663

"His long lost novel" is how the publishers describe Vladimir Nabokov's *The Enchanter*, which is in fact a very short novel - a novella at most - and has been lost, and found, more than once. Written in 1939, *Volshchnik* disappeared after the Nabokovs' move to the United States in 1940; then turned up again in 1959 or shortly before, at which time Nabokov offered it for publication to Walter Minton of Putnam's. The manuscript was never delivered; it was, according to Dmitri Nabokov, who has now translated it, "consulted by Father in the sixties before it submerged anew" during another de-campment (to Switzerland), to resurface "in the early eighties" when the Nabokov archive was sifted by Brian Boyd for a forthcoming literary biography. In any other writer this might look like carelessness or domestic disarray, but not in Nabokov's case. The fortunes of the story reflect the fluctuations of favour it enjoyed with its creator, and these have to do with its close, in some ways troubling, relation to a masterpiece, *Lolita*. This is the main burden of two authors' "Notes" and a lengthy postscript by the translator (who also lovingly unravels some leitmotifs and dismisses the attribution, discussed in the letters column of the TLS in August 1985, to Nabokov of *Novel with Cocaine*) with which the publishers have padded out the text to a respectable 127 pages.

The Enchanter is the story of a man's obsession with a twelve-year-old girl. In order to possess her he hits on the expedient of marrying her sickly, widowed mother, who, "pregnant with her own death" when he meets and weds her, gives birth to it soon after, leaving him in sole charge of the childish charmer. "The first little throb of *Lolita*" was how Nabokov referred to this conception; of the story itself he says "I was not pleased with it" and, when plagued again ten years later by "the throbbing, which had never quite ceased", he embarked on "a new treatment of the theme, this time in English". While at work on the novel, and imaginatively engrossed not just by the attempt "to fix once and for all the perilous magic of nymphets", as Humbert puts it, but by a new world and its language, Nabokov thought of the novella as "a dead scrap". Later still, when the "creative connection" with *Lolita* was broken, and he re-read *Volshchnik*, it struck him as "a beautiful piece of Russian prose, precise and lucid"; it is to Dmitri Nabokov's credit that the English version, except on one or two occasions, strikes us as a similarly beautiful, precise and lucid English story.

In mood and moral atmosphere *The Enchanter* is closer to *Despair* or *Invitation to a Beheading* than *Lolita*. It is narrated in the third person, though from the protagonist's point of view - we see the world heightened or distorted by his delirium, and we have access to his gloomy, joky introspection. He is unnamed. His stratagems are more diabolical than Humbert's, which are always tinged with desperation. He is forty, "thin, dry-lipped" and a Jeweller; though the locations - never specified in the story itself - are Paris and Provence, he has none of Humbert's gallicized sophistication; none of the dilettante *littérateur's* manic aliveness, and, where Humbert's self-lacerating ironies are playful and complex, the earlier protagonist's merely lacerate. What he and Humbert share, though - as do Albinus and Hermann - are the financial resources and freedom to pursue their obsession, and, an opportunity, once presented, the determination, the insane indifference to "normal" constraints which characterize the pursuit.

The enchanter of the title is the pursuer himself, though he mostly sees himself in a less flattering light ("the lone wolf was getting ready to don Granny's nightcap"); the title may recall *The Enchanted Hunters* motif in *Lolita*, and the girl whom he attempts to bring under a grotesque kind of spell is also his prey. If the enchanted hunter has here some of the ghastly self-awareness of his later, infinitely richer embodiment, the girl herself is

an extremely pale shadow of Dolores Haze. She is still very much a child. There is no suggestion that she shares the aura of "innocent" depravity which surrounds Lolita. Her presence is almost purely physical, and how:

the liveliness of her russet curls (recently trimmed); the radiance of her large, slightly vacuous eyes, somehow suggesting translucent gooseberries; her merry, warm complexion; her pink mouth slightly open so that two large front teeth barely rested on the protuberance of the lower lip; the summery tint of her bare arms with the sleek little foxlike hairs running along the forearms; the indistinct tenderness of her still narrow but already not quite flat chest . . .

There is also something poignant or pathetic about the girl, deriving mainly from her semi-orphaned and farmed-out state (too much of a threat to her mother's health, she lives a loveless existence with family friends in the provinces), but for the most part the book has a sustained undertone of horrific farce, half precipitated by, half the raw material for, the protagonist's cynical manipulations. His seduction of her mother, the mother herself ("tall, pale, broad-hipped", "with a hairless wart near a nostril of her bulbous nose"), the details of consummation (with both mother and daughter), the steady progression towards disaster - also farce, when it comes - and most of all the mental processes of the enchanter, alternating between semi-appalled analytical detachment and entranced fantasy, have a sombre, cruel hilarity, which was carried over into *Lolita's* more nightmarish moments. Humbert's account of desire in *extremis* is driven by the need to explain, and, overwhelmingly, to share: his love, his pain. The enchanter shares with us principally a sick joke: reality remade in the image of his madness, sometimes thwarted, sometimes abetted, as Dmitri Nabokov says, by Fate. The sense of doom is heavy, and we are reminded of McFate, abetted by Clare Quilty, in *Lolita*. For the enchanter there is no such accounting; retribution comes in a bravura climax (the climax after the climax).

It is hard to imagine how any other book this year will give such sentence-by-sentence pleasure as this tale of a melancholy monster, who says "I know that I would be a most loving father in the common sense of the word" and acts out, to his destruction, the uncommon sense of it, who is briefly cheered by giving, to a "toddler", an absentminded smile, since "only humans are capable of absentmindedness", whose shudders and throbs of yearning are unlike those most of us know only in their object, and in whose story (thanks, perhaps, to translator's hindsight - or hind-hearing - and sleight-of-hand) we catch frequent pre-echoes and stirrings of a much more flexible, inventive, alert, caressing and humane voice:

His other lucky moments had been of the same ironic genre: a fidget with a lock of hair over one eye in a leather-upholstered office where he was waiting to see her father (the pounding in his chest - "Say, are you ticklish?"; or that other one, with shoulders the color of gingerbread, showing him, in a crowded-out corner of a sunlit courtyard, some black salad devouring a green rabbit.

Imogene Skillman is showy, casual, mocking and promiscuous - all alien characteristics, as far as hard-pressed Marya is concerned. Marya drives herself on, going all out for the highest grades. She is showered with fellowships and prizes, and breaks into print. She moves from an obscure university to a famous one, and falls under the spell of a middle-aged professor named Maximilian Fein, who takes a poor view of non-academic publications. An advantageous affair marks the next stage in Marya's astonishing progress.

This is a novel about the making of a critic, a profession indicated early on in Marya's alert disengagement, her ability to shut herself off from her surroundings, without shutting anything out. Farouche, self-willed and deficient in the social instinct, Marya takes naturally to observing and judging. She has also taken to heart a precept of her missing mother's: once you start crying you won't be able to stop. Crying is thereafter out for Marya. Never mind if her aunt disowns her in Woolworth's ("She's not my kin, she's my husband's niece"), if she is taunted and degraded. A brilliant future, after all, is in front of her, if her stamina proves equal to the effort required to attain it (it does). As an accompaniment to success, though, comes an increasing concern with the underprivileged past, the mining town with its makeshift accommodations, the abandoned sawmill and the smell of kerosene. Dwelling on these particulars has an inevitable outcome: Marya, in the end, gives in to the impulse to track down her mother. She can afford to do so, the implication is, having taken her life very thoroughly into her own hands.

Marya, we may suppose, is written in the author's natural style, which isn't the only style available to her (sometimes, as in *Mysteries of Winterthur*, she goes in for very assured pastiche, resorting without apparent effort to a mock-nineteenth-century idiom). Her approach is generally rather intricate and wordy, whether this leads to expansiveness, or - as we find in *Marya* - a kind of vehement concentration. Her narrative manner has about it a good deal of American robustness and fluency; Marya, for example, doesn't include irony or self-mockery among her defensive strategies, as a typical English heroine would have done. She takes herself even more seriously than her author takes her ("Such extravagant metaphors should have embarrassed her, but did not"). Joyce Carol Oates lets us know, after having allowed Marya to ponder for a moment or two on her "fleshy destiny"). The effect of reading *Marya* is curious: the book manages to seem at once invigorating and bleak.

Marya is next shown in the throes of an edgy friendship in her sophomore year, a friendship that ends badly, since neither participant really understands the principle of give-and-take.

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Taking life seriously

Patricia Craig

JOYCE CAROL OATES
Marya: A life
310pp. Cape. £10.95.
0224 024205

Marya, an exceptionally forceful piece of fiction, concerns the advancement of a misfit, a girl from a hard-bitten immigrant community, born in a tar-paper shanty in 1947 or thereabouts, and deprived of both her parents by the age of eight. The life of Marya Knauer - the first half of it at any rate - is presented in segments (eleven in all); Joyce Carol Oates's vigorous, impatient approach, her eagerness to jot down the essential detail, makes her plunge straight into the centre of some crucial incident, before going on to indicate the circumstances surrounding it (there is, as well, some tinkering with the time sequence).

The story comes at us in stark bits and pieces, intensely imagined. Marya, at her first appearance, is being roued out of her sleep and taken to see the body of her father, killed and disfigured in some drunken shindig; she and her younger brothers are promptly dumped on relatives, by a mother afterwards referred to (though not in front of Marya) as "the bitch". The glimpse we have had of Marya's mother Vera has shown her as stubborn and ungratifying, and these traits, modified by clarity of perception, are reproduced in Vera's daughter.

What comes next? Marya, in a dump for wrecked cars, undergoing sexual abuse at the hands of her cousin Lee; Marya, not dissociating herself from the baiting of a well-meaning schoolmaster; Marya, evading the traditional female resource of early marriage. An infatuation with Catholicism quickly runs its course. From adolescence on, every move of Marya's is planned and shrewd and desperate, as Joyce Carol Oates once remarked of a character in the story, "Accomplished Desires", from her 1984 collection *Wild Swans*. She wins her scholarship to university, attracting resentment and disparagement in her home district ("You and your high-class scholarship!") her aunt scoffs, and even suffering a taste of horseplay-turned-to-brutality on account of it. Those who reject, and thereby criticize, the ways of the community can expect to be turned against.

Marya is next shown in the throes of an edgy friendship in her sophomore year, a friendship that ends badly, since neither participant really understands the principle of give-and-take.

Monster-poet

George Szirtes

MILAN KUNDERA
Life is Elsewhere
Translated by Peter Kussi
311pp. Faber. £9.95.
0571 145604

When Keats referred to the "Wordsworthian or egotistical sublime", he was defining one aspect of the poet as romantic. He went on mercilessly to pin down the specimen in all its chameleon-like splendour: the poetic character had "no self", was "everything and nothing" and was continually "filling some other body".

Jaromil, the poet in Milan Kundera's *Life is Elsewhere*, written in 1969, certainly conforms to this pattern. The narrative is interspersed with instances from the lives of various poets: like Rimbaud he is a mother's boy turned revolutionary, like Hugo he longs to be loved by the whole world, like Lermontov he is terrified of ridicule, and like Shelley he dreams of a fiery death which he achieves only by proxy. He is described as living in a world of mirrors, a world prepared by his manically possessive mother, who remains both his closest friend and most intimate enemy. Jaromil is a failure with other women; the only one who loves him selflessly is a plain redhead whom he picks up by mistake and whose brother he betrays to the security police. (His greatest admirer as a poet is an old classmate who has joined the force.) But Jaromil betrays everyone in the process of fulfilling his poetic destiny: he even manages to corrupt that when he deserts his lyrical instincts and turns to public exhortatory verse in service of the Party. Whatever he does, though, he believes in and justifies to himself at the time. All weakness and treachery are thereby the shadow of some virtue. He is, in short, a monster - a nonentity dominated by his mother, whose one gift is to transform outside events into an interior drama of language and symbol.

This picture of the lyrical imagination would not in itself be particularly original: the species has often been observed. Ortega y Gasset spoke of poetry as "adolescence fermented and thus preserved", and Kundera's book is steeped in the colours of adolescence. What gives this study its peculiar poignancy is the setting, that turning-point in Czech history when the Communists took over after the War. Why is it, asks Kundera, that poets of real talent could devote themselves to movements that behaved abominably, and write perfectly genuine poems in their praise? Is there something inherently corruptible in the nature of poetry? The tag from Rimbaud, which gives the book its title, provides him with the answer. For the poetic imagination, life is always elsewhere: the self is insulated from it with its own passions and dreams.

Like many Central Europeans, Kundera is a natural fabulist who observes the follies and hypocrisies of human behaviour and keeps his characters at a distance. But, like other Kundera books, *Life is Elsewhere* also contains a dream sequence of great clarity and power, an excursion into the element of poetry. As usual it serves to concentrate the reader on the real wishes and fears of the central character. The distancing of his prose is equally dreamlike in effect: its eroticism is a function of the distance.

The plot of this early book is very much like a case study: small humiliations and flattery alternate throughout the poet's childhood. The characters think in a complex, yet often mechanical, way and we are not really aware of them as individuals - it is through their dreams and their fates that we know them. We see them rather like voyeurs. Indeed, at one point we switch focus to the red-haired girl, and know of Jaromil's death before the narrative proper has revealed it to us. The natural transition from narrative to dream might be said to be conditioned by a society where dream and nightmare are inextricably bound up with the quality of life. What we see is precisely what the narrator-god wishes us to see: we know he is presenting us with loaded evidence, but are arrested by the technique and by the humane vision. *Life is Elsewhere* is a little too much like a thesis to be counted among Kundera's very best books but it remains essential reading.

John Co. 126

The case for reconciliation

Iain Bamforth

DAVID BRADLEY
The Chaneyville Incident
432pp. Serpent's Tail. £11.95 (paperback,
£5.95).
0852420016
JOHN EDGAR WIDEMAN
A Glance Away
186pp. Allison and Busby. £10.95.
0850317398
CHESTER HIMES
Lonely Crusade
298pp. Thunder's Mouth Press. \$8.95.
0938410377

The Chaneyville Incident is David Bradley's second novel, ten years in the writing, and first published in the United States in 1981. It is a rambling and epic account, sometimes picaresque, sometimes sternly contemplative, of life over several generations in a small black township in Pennsylvania, of miscegenetic liaisons and the "old, indestructible lie", and of a son's urgent desire to claim the inheritance that the white slave-owners would have denied to his ancestors. It could easily have shed half its length without losing dramatic impact, but at the expense of the marvelously hyperbolic vocabulary of some of its characters and all the vivid particulars that give it authenticity.

The book's narrator is John Washington, a rather world-weary professor of history, who temporarily leaves the white psychiatrist he is living with in order to spend some time at the bedside of Old Jack, a whisky-sozzled, bronchitic man not far from death. In the past, Old Jack had achieved some renown as a rogue and moonshiner, and through this latter activity became the friend of Moses Washington, an unusual man of exacting probity, and the father of John. During his lifetime Moses had managed to do more than most: kill a few men, rescue a fellow negro from a lynching mob, suborn almost the entire county with his whisky, and learn a few secrets of the whites. He was a man who had discovered his own salvation and inculcated the same desire for knowledge in his son; yet one month after making his will – a will which is thought to be able to make or break a few reputations in the county – he is discovered dead in a former slave cemetery with a shotgun beside him.

This apparently absurd death provides the pretext for John to contemplate his antecedents. Initially, Old Jack acts as his amanuensis; after his death he discovers a remarkable card-coded system (a kind of Dewey classification of personal and world events) in his father's loft, and sets about recreating their invisible history. "And so, without even suspecting the danger, I fell prey to one of the greatest fallacies that surround the study of the past: the notion that it is possible to discover and analyze and interpret without getting caught up and swept away." He is caught up in the story of men who were listed as "chattels personal", whose status in the world was calculated in the same terms as any other commodity. From his father's papers and other records he comes upon his most illustrious predecessor, a manumitted slave called simply "CK" or "Drobbingnag" by a master with literary pretensions, who began writing an autobiography in the 1830s as a way of improving his writing. For some years CK supported the Abolitionists, but on recognizing that profit and gain are as important reasons as any in maintaining slavery, he decided the best way to topple the system was to smuggle slaves from the South to relative safety in the North. Eventually this cost him his life, but not before he had defrauded the South of two million dollars' worth of slave-revenge.

In investigating the possible motives for Moses's murder, John recognizes the limits of his methodology; he has "extrapolated too far with no data." But he has at least understood the significance of his father's death, and why he took his own life. It was no more than a simple statement that he was free:

But I, some of the men with dark skin guessed the truth. These men did not fear the law, for they believed that when the whites came upon them they would simply go away and live in a place where there were no men with pale skin who stole the spirit by selling men. And so they did not desert as the men with pale skin did. And as they were honest, and

chained, and starved. But it did not matter. For they believed the truth. . . .

At the end he burns his cards and filing-system, and leaves his great-grandfather's testaments intact, knowing that history is not constructed with chapter headings.

The title of John Edgar Wideman's *A Glance Away* – first published in 1967 when he was twenty-six and now issued in the UK for the first time – evokes the precarious state of grace of which it is an exploration. There is little in the novel which betrays it as the work of a young man – an occasionally ponderous symbolism, perhaps – and far more which impresses with its stylistic maturity. Wideman has assimilated the influence of white American novelists – Hemingway and Faulkner, in particular – as much as he has taken his place within the black tradition.

Less methodically than *The Chaneyville Incident*, but with more bravura and apparent knowingness, the novel investigates the case for reconciliation. Both its main characters are outcasts. One is Eddie Lawson, a young black returning home for Easter from a clinic in the South where he has been trying to kick a drug habit through the dubious therapy of "voluntary commitment"; and the other, Robert Thurley, a white, middle-aged, homosexual professor of literature who is forever ruminating on Villon and the Symbolists and indigestible bits of T.S. Eliot. No one in this anonymous northern city wants Eddie except an albino childhood friend, Brother Small, who is also Thurley's sometime lover. His mother expects him to conform and to move into his father's shoes; his lover Alice is waiting for an opportunity to punish him for an infidelity with a white girl. He meets Thurley in an illegal nightclub, and by a strange token of recognition, the two men take stock of each other's pain and misery.

But how could Eddie know that beneath his olive suit, within the flushed, white flesh was a consciousness just as acute, just as accusing, just as aware of the beast as Eddie's hate had made him. And if they could meet so powerfully, if the same anger could be shared, could not remorse and the act of forgiveness bind them just as lightly? In this desire to share . . . Thurley had always been held back in fear. And as long as that fear remained he had to flee. Thurley does not flee Eddie's insistent appeal for help; in fact he restores a measure of dignity and self-respect to him. Eddie's acceptance of him in turn removes the accumulated guilt and

The punitive past

Anne Haverty

ANNE DEVLIN
The Way-Paver
151pp. Faber. £8.95.
0571 145973

Anne Devlin depicts with firmness the capacity of the past to haunt and dictate the present – and indeed the future. In "Naming the Names", an episode in the past has perverted the narrator's psychic or emotional development; in "The Way-Paver" the past is what she runs from, and escape renders the present precarious. Dreams, whose symbolism is inevitably overt, play their part. But then the past is bound to be compelling if you come, as Devlin does, from Belfast, where it festers so horribly.

It seems natural too that the Belfast stories should be the stronger. Besides these, the more whimsical tales of love affairs, such as "Sam" and "First Bite", appear inconsequential. The style is modestly spare and oblique, but in, say, "Five Notes After A Visit" this quality of terseness is used to good effect. A woman returns to Belfast to live with her lover and a month later leaves again. He is from one side of the "wall", she the other. Their brief exchange credibly reveals the dangerous abnormality of life in a city where even those not committed to a cause are emanated and divided.

"Naming the Names" powerfully illustrates the same theme, the normalization of the abnormal. A woman who works in an off-beat bookshop, trading as a lending-library since the real library "had been petrol-bombed", junks a man to his death – a political murder – in a park. As an attempt, however, to explain the mind of an activist, the story is, perhaps

self-accusation. Wideman's message is clear: pain has no colour.

Chester Himes died in 1984; he is best known for the series of adventures featuring the Harlem detectives Coffin Ed Smith and Graveyard Jones, and for his first novel *If He Hollers Let Him Go. Lonely Crusade*, his second, was first published in 1947 and although it is not a sequel, it serves, in many ways, as a companion piece to *If He Hollers*, which was the story of an articulate young black leader attempting to make his way in the shipyards of Los Angeles. Once again Himes's descriptions of the workplace are convincing and vivid, but in *Lonely Crusade* the invective is, if anything, more furious, the despair more tautly controlled, the intelligence more finely honed. When it was first published it managed to distance precisely that chorus of liberal support which had acclaimed the first novel, through its brutally honest exposure of Communist motives within the workforce and its disclosures of black antisemitism.

Lee Gordon is an intelligent, troubled and not always sympathetic character who, having been educated at UCLA, is hired as the first black union organizer at an aeroplane factory. The novelty and responsibility of this position, his estrangement from his fellow workers through education, and the resentment of the white officials he has to deal with, take their toll on his own self-determination and his marriage. To the Communists he is a potential pawn, and they plant a mole in the factory, Luther McGregor, whose self-serving cynicism and servile complacencies are a mocking alternative to Gordon's own idealism. Yet it is McGregor who shocks Gordon into self-realization by murdering another man in front of him.

Despite the fact that most of the relationships in the book are soured and bilious, it can be seen both as a love story and as the tale of Gordon coming to terms with his own brutality – which he has inflicted on his wife to the extent of raping her (since he is invariably impotent, she allows it as the only possible statement of his manhood). In fact, it is her magnanimity and deeper anguish – she endures his temporary desertion of her for a white woman – that mend his soul. And although this uncomfortable novel might seem dated in its treatment of sexual politics, it is still as vital in its central concerns, forty years on.

inevitably, as inadequate and banal as are the explanations in real life. The perspective is the sociological one of cause and effect; the past is always with us, punitive, irrevocable. When transposed to fiction, the currency of which is a truth that is never simple, this view can seem crudely deterministic. "The Journey to Somewhere Else", a story in which the adult narrator is haunted in Switzerland by the disappearance of her brother when they were both children in Belfast, is more successful, partly because of the relaxed narration, partly because it employs the subtler Proustian device of evoking memory sensually, in this case through the smell of satsumas.

But a past that intrudes only haphazardly is uncharacteristic of Devlin's writing. More often, the protagonist is presented as an assemblage of past episodes, and the value of an experience depends on its capacity to trigger the memory of one of these. Thus, in "Life Lines", the woman who cries out in pain when making love wonders "What moment had he touched in me?" This rather mechanistic view of life is reflected in the writing. Devlin's technique is extremely competent, and her approach is attractively cool. But her stories suffer from a monotony of range, theme and, most glaringly, of tone. They are all told in the first person, the "I" almost un differentiated throughout although the people it represents are several. It is often ineptly inappropriate, the gritty and subjective tone weakening the effect of what might otherwise be a poignant and harrowing narrative. It is a voice that does not always succeed in engaging the reader. Yet in this collection Anne Devlin has proved, meticulously, that she can make stories. Now, she might be less meagre with her imagination and her ambition.

At the gates of Europe

Anthony Sattin

JOSEPH ROTH
Hotel Savoy
Translated by John Hoare
183pp. Chatto and Windus. £9.95.
07011 28788

The Hotel Savoy of Joseph Roth's early novel, translated from German for the first time, stands in an unnamed Russian town at the gates of Europe. This Savoy is described as "More European than any other hotel in the east" and to it, soon after the end of the First World War, comes Gabriel Dan, of Russian Jewish parents, who has fought for the Kaiser and served three years in a Siberian camp as his reward. Gabriel intends spending a week or so at the hotel before moving west; he has relatives in town as a further inducement to stay.

In the hotel, "with its seven storeys, its gilded coat of arms and its uniformed porter", Gabriel meets the haunting Stasia who, for a while, transforms his view of the world; the tragic Santschin family; the sinister, middle-aged lift-boy Ignatz; Hirsch Fisch, who dreams the winning numbers on the government lottery and makes other people rich – a complete cast of peripheral characters thrown together by chance and the war, all running to or from something. Few of them will fulfil their dreams. Some, like Stasia, are caught at the hotel with no means of paying their bills, and inter themselves even more deeply by pawning their belongings to Ignatz in lieu of rent. As Gabriel frequently remarks, "I could arrive at the Hotel Savoy with a single shirt, I could leave with twenty trunks."

Into this disintegrating community come two outsiders: from the east, from Gabriel's company, comes Zvonimir Pansin, strong and dynamic, a revolutionary with "politically unreliable" stamped on his military papers, who shares Gabriel's room, finds him work and food and who uses the word "America" as an exclamation for all that he considers to be wonderful; from the west, from America, comes Henry Bloomfield, favoured son of the late Jechiel Blumenfeld and of the whole town which waits for his return which, they are sure, will result in the revitalization of their industry and their lives – a simple dream of the old world and new money.

The story is narrated by Gabriel himself, who, as traveller, lover, friend of Zvonimir, secretary to Bloomfield, a man wary of Ignatz, and curious about the unseen hotelier Kalegopulos, is ideally placed to provide a low-level overview of the struggle between the influence of east and west on the old hotel. It is tempting to interpret this as allegory, for such it appears, but Roth resists. Gabriel still looks to America at the end, and in this way, perhaps, Roth's writing has dated, stretching as it does from the end of one world war to the start of another (*Hotel Savoy*, first published in German in 1924, comes at the beginning of his oeuvre). The apparent simplicity of style, the bustling, acutely observed and accurately described occasional characters, and the ironic wink at allegory are all already working here, unimpeded by John Hoare's fluent translation, but the sharpness of focus, the poignancy and nostalgia which stand out in Roth's later work are less apparent.

This lack of refinement, compensated for by greater energy, is made more noticeable by the inclusion in this volume of two short stories – "Fallmerayer: the Stationmaster" (1933) and "The Bust of the Emperor" (1935). Both succeed in describing to startling effect the demise of the old empires and the collapse of the lives of a range of affectionately drawn characters who want nothing more than to continue as they did before. It is a plea for a life untouched by twentieth-century politics.

Roth committed suicide in Paris in 1939, and his work, free from the knowledge of the Nazi trauma, brings fresh and lasting impressions of the shift from imperial to dictatorial Europe, of desolating morale and morality, of the crisis for the innocent, habitually patriotic individual. *Hotel Savoy* is a welcome, if minor, addition to the growing collection of translated work from a great writer who can at last find a new readership.

Communication problems

Jonathan Mirsky

HELENA DRYSDALE
Alone through China and Tibet
207pp. Constable. £9.95.
009 4672008
JOHN LOWE
Into China
224pp. John Murray. £11.95.
07195 43339

Helena Drysdale, a young Cambridge graduate, and John Lowe, resident and traveller in the Far East for twenty years, have each endured the rigours of the independent traveller's standard route through parts of China, complete with overcrowded trains and buses, rude hotel staff, bad food, spitting, yelling, and sudden acts of kindness and generosity.

Drysdale tells us: "A man sitting opposite me passed most of the journey with his fingers up his nose, others spat, others dribbled, until the floor was awash." "People were eating kebabs which I now saw were nothing but lumps of animal gut, veins, and aorta . . . On a stall were bowls of wiry black hair." These observations of disgust are often followed by an exonerative commonplace: "Chinese food is famine food, and after years of famine nothing is wasted."

Lowe visits the same food stalls in Canton, and he too experiences "a variety of gruesome sights and pungent smells. My guidebook accurately described it as 'a takeaway zoo'." It certainly confirmed all my darkest suspicions about Cantonese cooking." A commonplace similar to Drysdale's follows these comments: "But no doubt centuries of hunger and near-starvation give people an appreciation of anything which is a source of flavour or protein."

Drysdale does not say when she travelled in China, but the book-jacket reveals that she was there in 1985, for five months. It is hard to gain much sense of how she spent her time but it is clear that she can only communicate with the Chinese in her own language. In Canton at New Year, where she is cheated by an English-speaking con-woman, she notices the signs proclaiming executions, which permit her a false "fact" – there is little crime in China – swiftly followed by another: female infanticide occurs only in some remote rural areas. In search of the sun she goes to Hainan island where she meets more English-speaking Chinese. She moves north, briefly visiting Shanghai and Suzhou, virtually skips, or forgets what she saw in, Peking, and hurries west towards Lhasa, which is reached after a disagreeable bus ride on which she has forgotten to bring anything to eat or drink. She loves

Tibet, is befriended by a band of hippies, and exits overland into Nepal.

Despite the title of her book, Drysdale is rarely "alone". During the first part of the journey she is accompanied by a Belgian, about whom we learn little, who leaves her to go home to an incumbent girlfriend, and for whom she longs. But she soon meets new companions. Her encounter with one of them should have given her a clue to the reason for most of her difficulties. The friend, who "seemed to open all doors", knew something more useful than the fragments of Buddhist aphorisms frequently quoted by Drysdale when in trouble: *he could speak Chinese*. This permitted him to do things which Drysdale found complicated – like buying bus tickets.

John Lowe, author of the earlier *Into Japan*, which showed that he had at last lived in that country, writes less moodily than Drysdale, and provides a great deal of straightforward information, such as how to persuade someone to give you a bed for a night, which tourist offices defraud you and that a mug and reusable chopsticks are invaluable. Although he travels over much of the same ground as Drysdale, including Tibet, where he watches the same cook preparing the same meal, he reveals less about himself.

There is always room for good "I saw China books", such as Lynn Pan's *China's Sorrow*, in which she describes a China beyond the backpackers' itinerary, and introduces us to Chinese who cannot speak English. Drysdale tells us a great deal about her feelings of disgust at Chinese eating habits and sanitary arrangements, but she is unable to look beneath the surface. Dazed, she journeys from tropical Hainan, to cold Shanghai, to the parched Gobi, and admits, "I had travelled thousands of miles over many months and yet the people here looked the same as all the others". Lowe's description of European travellers of the likes of Drysdale – and to some extent, himself – is telling: "I doubt if they understood much of what they saw. They were consumed by the business of travelling and the main purpose of arrival was that it gave a pause to wrangle about the next destination."

Travelling in China is arduous and patience-testing, even for the Chinese themselves. Lowe warns that 20 per cent of one's time must be set aside for administration. But much of his, and Drysdale's, frustration and rage was caused by ignorance, especially of the language. One cannot help but speculate on what sort of book a native of Chengdu, say, would manage to write after travelling, very cheaply, throughout Britain, if he had no English and gained most of his impressions from encounters with speakers of pidgin Chinese.

But Eames does have a different philosophy – or at least a different mental preoccupation – of his own to convey. It is an obsession with Joseph Conrad. He sees all his encounters and experiences against a backdrop of Conrad's novels. The sounds and smells of the East and of the sea are the more meaningful to him because they help him to identify with Lord Jim or some other character from the pages of his mentor. He has an affinity with the sea and many of his best descriptions are nautical. The title of the book is itself a quotation from Conrad, and Eames sees himself as crossing Conrad's shadow line and thus finding himself and his real personality.

In the process he has many adventures not unworthy of his model. On the passage through the chain of islands between Bali and Darwin (in northern Australia) in a junk-rigged *prahu*, his ship loses its bowsprit in one of the storms for which those waters are renowned. Back on dry land he nearly succumbs to a snow-storm while crossing – in a singularly imprudent fashion – a pass near the Tibetan border.

In the intervals of all this physical activity, Eames managed to launch himself on a serious journalistic career. His comments on the anti-septic municipal régime in Singapore suggest that he has as sharp an eye for political and economic symptoms as he has for social ones. His journey provided not only the material for a very readable travel book but also for a new life.

Back-tracking

Gavin Lyall

ALEXANDER FRATER
Beyond the Blue Horizon: On the track of Imperial Airways
430pp. Heinemann. £12.95.
0434 270806

Reviving a childhood enthusiasm for aeroplanes, Alexander Frater took a sabbatical from journalism and a book of tickets thick enough to qualify for the *Guinness Book of Records*, and set out to retrace the old Imperial Airways route from London to Brisbane, established in the late 1930s. Then, it took two weeks and thirty-five (intentional) stops, sleeping in hotels or in a purpose-built fort in Arabia overnight. Mr Frater tried to re-do it all, hotels included, and it took him far longer.

Provided nothing went wrong, such as failing to finish the 500-mile Timor Sea sector with its storms and sharks in a ten-seater biplane, Imperial passengers had it easier. Their captains were personalities, like Cunarder captains, coming back to dine with the passengers on four-course meals with silver and cut glass. This was possible simply because airlines in those days had to have a structure large enough to support a massive wingspan and the feeble engines which lifted the weight, so that there was plenty of room to spare.

As Frater found, not all the hotels they used before the war are still there, nor all the airfields – the first of them, Croydon, for example – nor even all the countries. But he did his remarkably dogged best, back-tracking where necessary to touch base where direct flights no longer exist. We all know there are small airlines connecting small cities with big cities with big airlines, but few passengers, flying on the main routes, realize that they are flying over an undergrowth of small-plane lines that interconnect across the globe. Frater flew low, and found that Alan Ladd was still piloting through storms, William Bendix still mending the en-

gines with chewing-gum, Veronica Lake still serving coffee from flasks.

Whenever possible, Frater occupied the same hotel rooms as Imperial passengers once did, but most of the hotels have degenerated in the Hilton/Intercontinental era. He has a talent for describing sleaze, however, right down to the lady in Bangkok firing ping-pong balls from her vagina. He encounters grimy hotel-clerks, taxi-drivers, petty airport bureaucrats and weather that even Alan Ladd might have had to fly through with both hands on the stick. He has an enviable talent for chatting up co-passengers, stewardesses and, when he can get to the flight-deck, the crews themselves. He has recreated his journey as a highly readable adventure.

What rather gets lost, however, is the old Imperial route itself. Frater quotes from contemporary sources whenever he can, describing how things were in those days, but he puts his own experiences first, so that the continuity of the Imperial route vanishes – and its continuity was its triumph. There were no alternative branch-lines then to bypass problems; you kept your dinner jacket increased, and forged on. It was pioneering, in its way. Nor is the author's use of technical information about aeroplanes very happy. He knows the name of everything and of its manufacturer, but presents it all in cigarette-card fashion, without further explanation of its purpose or weakness.

A pilot doesn't have to remember who built the undercarriage; he does have to remember that one leg comes up sooner than the other and when to touch the rudder to compensate.

That said, I am grateful to Mr Frater for doing what I wouldn't dare do myself: experiencing what goes on in the aerial jungle below the gin-soaked stratosphere.

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THE TIMES

Steady the Buffs...

Rudyard Kipling is out of copyright. In *The Times* books page next week Peter Ackroyd reflects on the man and his oeuvre; and Basil Boothroyd reviews a new tale of the London police

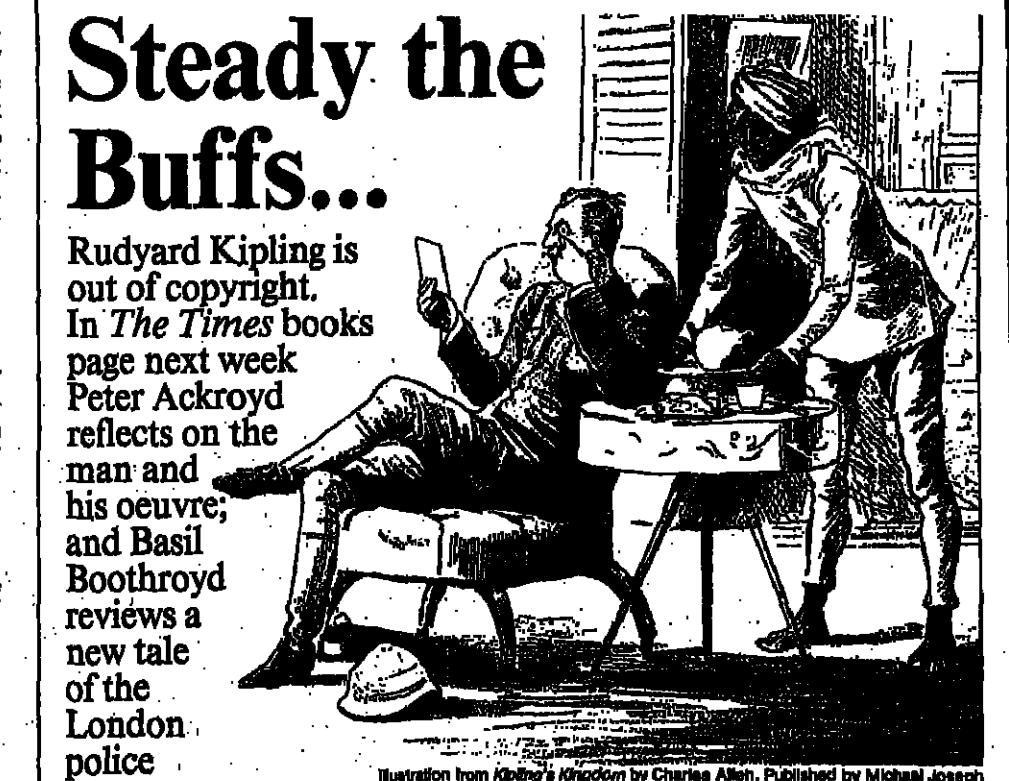


Illustration from Kipling's *Kim* by Charles Allen. Published by Michael Joseph

...and regularly in *The Times*, Bernard Levin (left) on the way we live now, John Higgins on opera, Suzy Menkes on fashion, Kenneth Fleet on finance, Irving Wardle on the theatre, Frances Gibb on the law, Paul Griffiths on music, Shona Crawford Poole on travel, Clifford Longley on the Church, Philip Howard on words, David Robinson on the cinema . . . and much more each week

THE TIMES

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John Walsh

JOHN A. THOMPSON
Manual of Curatorship: A guide to museum practice
553pp. Sevenoaks: Butterworth. £40.
0408014113

This collection of essays by some sixty authors is the first attempt at an all-purpose guide for museum professionals to the many different jobs they do. As a reference book it has no equal in the literature on museums. The chapters are grouped in four sections covering "The Museum Context", by which is meant history, structure and characteristics of museums in Britain, with a chapter on ethics; "Collection Management", including research and conservation; "Visitor Services", that is, exhibitions, education and publications; and finally "Management and Administration". Most chapters have substantial bibliographies that are in themselves valuable.

The first section includes four chapters by Jeffrey Lewis, whose survey of the history of the world's museums moves efficiently over three millennia in fourteen pages with little time to linger over ideas or specifics. Lewis's essay, to borrow a phrase from the eighteenth-century curator of the Schloss Belvedere gallery cited by the author, is (like most of the book) "more for one's instruction than delight". The intricacies of modern international museum organizations are dwelt upon, however, and Lewis gives them as much space as the preceding three centuries. His chapters on the history of museums in Britain are largely an account of organizations and official action, inevitably based on annual reports, studies, Museums Association papers, and the like. There are reminders that the world has changed, such as Sir Ashton Lever's notice to the public in 1773 that since he was "tired out of the insolence of the common people" he would no longer permit visits "to the lower class except that they come provided with a ticket from some Lady or Gentleman of my acquaintance". Or reminders that it has changed very little, such as the unending debate over how extensively exhibits should be labelled.

Sir David Wilson, director of the British Museum, contributes a brief chapter on national museums. He is forthright and interesting on the chauvinistic motives of the founders of state museums of national culture. He discusses the variety of "monolithic" museums (British Museum, Hermitage, Metropolitan) for whose collections "bigger is

generally better", and speaking of all museums, not merely art museums, he emphasizes that their primary duty is not didactic. Instead "an experience, aesthetic, cultural, emotional or one of a half a hundred exclamatory sensations, ranging from the spiritual to the curious" is what the visitor must gain. No "labels in Noddy language, coloured flashing lights . . . it is the objects which are important: they must speak for themselves". They often speak *soito voce*, however, in voices easily muffled by the surrounding noise, the visual and aural clutter so common to our galleries. And when the voices of objects are heard, their language is not always familiar. How to offer translation without Noddy talk is a challenge few museums or galleries have yet mastered.

Michael Compton writes perceptively about the National Gallery and the Tate. He is too kind to the National Gallery renovations of the 1960s and 70s, and misses a chance to draw lessons from the more garish impositions of corporate modern décor on nineteenth-century rooms. He credits the Gallery's restorers with a policy of "revealing the pictures as they are and, not attempting either to accommodate them to what people may expect, or to restore them to what they might have been". Extreme though many cleanings since the war have been, I doubt that today's Gallery staff would subscribe to such a simplistic statement of policy. And however much they may respect the "archaeological truth of the object as a document", as Compton puts it, they are as much obliged as any other restorers to try to divine the artist's intentions and be guided by them. In the past thirty years the National Gallery of Scotland, which rates only a few lines of Compton's text, has set an impressive example of sensitivity in restoration of pictures and in respect for an even quirkier building than the one in Trafalgar Square.

Richard Foster surveys the larger provincial museums and art galleries, their distinctive and sometimes eccentric collections, and their problems of money, space and politics. In the course of his chapter on university museums Alan Warhurst makes a strong case for direct government support. Neil Cossons writes of independent museums, which represent some of the most vigorous new growth, some springing from such enthusiasms as local history, or from such contemporary issues as the environment, or from such new perceptions of what matters in history as "industrial archaeology".

A chapter on "Ethics and the Curator" by A. J. Duggan is a commonsensical restatement of the code of conduct adopted by the Museums Association, illustrated by entertain-

ing diagrams of the involuted conflicting relationships that make such codes helpful, if only as reminders of all that can go wrong. More often they serve professionals as a means of self-defence against well-meant importunings.

Much the longest section is devoted to "Collection Management": record-keeping, documentation, research, handling, storage and conservation. It begins with a chapter by Peter Cannon-Brookes on "The Nature of Museum Collections" that is mainly about acquiring and disposing. Like other writers in the book he stresses the need for thoughtful policy-making. The emphasis is on disposing of the unwanted in museum collections (the Pentagonian jargon word "deaccessioning" seems to have stuck in Great Britain); and much is made of the Metropolitan Museum's philosophy and paperwork, which are cited as exemplary. How they became so is a remarkable story of blunders made in the early 1970s by individuals and committees, followed by legal investigations and corrective action that would make a handbook in itself. The Met's tale would be more instructive than its printed forms, which take up three pages here.

As might be expected, "curatorship" comes in for little self-criticism; instead the problems of museums and galleries are identified as lack of money, insensitive or uncooperative public authorities, and incomplete knowledge. Readers looking for a thoughtful critique of museums' performance had better turn to the newspapers or to the odd article in professional journals. Dennis Farr's piece on research in fine art collections, for example, ticks off such major achievements as Sir John Pope-Hennessy's sculpture catalogue for the Victoria and Albert Museum or Angelica Rudenstine's catalogue of the Guggenheim Museum without considering how unlikely it has become that such feats will be duplicated, now that museums have redirected so much staff time and attached such glamour to temporary exhibitions. The content of exhibition catalogues has changed, too, away from painstaking entries for individual works towards synthesizing essays that often float clear of the exhibits, whose brief entries are relegated to the back of the book. These hybrid catalogues have a wider sale and a longer afterlife, it is argued. But the essential contribution of museum scholarship is to plumb the individual work, and to draw the big idea from the particulars. The pressure to make attractive books has given us the non-catalogue, published by a museum on the occasion of an exhibition but all too shallowly rooted in the material shown.

Among the collection of essays on research, the more specific the content the more interest-

ing the result. Rose Mary Allan's case study of the reconstruction of miners' cottages in County Durham will fascinate anybody. So will many of the essays by conservators that form the bulk of the "Collection Management" section. These not only summarize the purposes and methods of the various specialities (archival paper, biological collections, scientific instruments, enamel paintings, etc) but serve up a good deal of lore (how to make tissue-paper wads for packing, how to care for antlers). I imagine that few specialists will need these essays except for the invaluable bibliographies, occasional tables, and lists of suppliers. But general practitioners in conservation will use them, and others involved with museums—curators, directors, trustees, government officials—will learn greater respect for the exacting jobs they describe.

"Visitor Services" such as design, information-giving, educational activities and publishing are surveyed in eight chapters. There's a good introduction by Douglas Bassett and David Prince, and the former gives an exceptionally helpful bibliographic essay on museums and education. Much of the material seems to be here just because it belongs in a survey of what museums do; but the chapters on psychology, exhibition design and communicating through exhibitions have fresher flavour. We are a long way from Wackenroder in 1797, whom Michael Compton quotes earlier: "Picture halls . . . ought to be temples where in subdued and silent humility we may admire the great artists . . . Works of art in their essence, fit as little into the common flow of life as the thoughts of God." In fact the laboratories for these essays have been natural history museums, a far cry from temples; their lessons only apply partly to the picture galleries Wackenroder had in mind. But every museum and gallery proceeds on some assumptions about audience, whether acknowledged or not, that ought to be regularly examined by everybody in their service; and at least some of the effects of their educational work can be measured objectively. Michael Alt and Stevens Griggs argue persuasively that "the goals currently set by designers of educational exhibits are unattainable because they have misunderstood what it means to be a museum visitor". In most cases being a visitor means behaving like a window shopper, not like a scholar, and having expectations, purposes, and intentions for a museum visit that are often far from the curator's assumptions. "Higher entertainment" is what museums provide, writes Giles Velarde in an intelligent essay on exhibition design. The cost of ignoring these truths is much waste and frustration.

In the takeover battle. If those manning the barricades of the traditional Sotheby's saw Cogan and Swid as "wholly unacceptable", then why was it that they were not only prepared but apparently eager to do business with Henry A. Taubman? After all, if they were Jewish, so was he — and if the ultimate motive was simple mobbery, then was it not odd that the same inhibition did not apply with equal force to a man who said that "Selling art is a lot like selling root beer"?

The trouble is that Hogrefe (a journalistic writer on art for a variety of American publications) appears to have started out with a number of preconceptions — by no means all of them solidly founded in any genuine understanding of the social fabric of modern Britain. Nor is that the sole weakness in the presentation of his case. His grasp of London geography is rendered suspect by his persistent belief that Eaton Square is somehow in a different district from Belgrave and his use of the English language is perhaps adequately summed up by his readiness to write such sentences as, "Pocketbooks opened as wide as some mouths as prices began to bounce off the ceiling." It is not, one suspects, the sort of remark that was heard in the old aristocratic days of Sotheby's.

An enlarged, updated second edition of *The History of the Royal Academy 1768-1986* by Sidney C. Hutchinson was recently published. The first edition appeared in 1968.

Dynamic perceptions

Nicholas Wade

RUDOLF ARNHEIM
New Essays on the Psychology of Art
331pp. University of California Press. £21.25 (paperback, £9.25).
052005543

The visual psychology of art tends to start either with the optical projections from objects to the eye or with the act of perception itself. Rudolf Arnheim's writing follows the second of these starting-points. There are, however, several theories of perception capable of addressing issues in the visual arts, and the one that Professor Arnheim has consistently embraced is *Gestalt* theory — a delightful tribute to Max Wertheimer, one of its founders, is included in this new collection of essays. The others cover a wide range of topics, from Fechner's pantheism to concrete poetry, from map-making to musical expression. The thread that holds them all together is the dynamic forces of perception, or the compositional features in works of art that guide our perception and communicate the concepts of the artists: "Perception consists in finding a structural pattern that fits the configuration of shapes and colors transmitted from the retina."

Such definitions are more easily stated than justified. Indeed, the psychology of art generally thrives on an uneasy alliance between visual and verbal modes of expression. While there is a vast amount that can be (and has been) said about art, it is debatable how much needs saying. The images that are communicated visually by the artists are transformed, rather than translated, into words. So it is hardly surprising that the foremost practitioners of

the discipline are so clearly in love with language. Arnheim displays his own erudition by drawing upon numerous sources — literary, theatrical, musical and educational, as well as artistic, often citing them in their original forms — and then reveling in the licence that language gives him. "Art may seem to be in danger of being drowned by talk", as he wrote in an earlier book. He deplores, with characteristic eloquence, the loss of universal visual symbols — images recognized by everyone to convey the high ideals of human emotion and achievement; yet commentators on art have played their part in this movement to supplant visual by written images. Cognitive concepts are now communicated by words, despite the deluge of visual images that sweeps us daily. (Perhaps this is one of the reasons why Arnheim is so critical of photography.) This dominance of word over image is further reinforced here by reference to the illustrations in these essays: there are few reproductions of works of art, and the more numerous line-drawings do not always achieve the standards of visual literacy which Arnheim himself advocates.

Anchoring the analysis of pictures in perception rather than optics has many advantages, and these are subtly detailed in an essay here on inverted perspective. Moreover, Arnheim makes it clear that his concept of perception does not coincide with Wertheimer's. Wertheimer examined the interactions between geometrical elements in simple two-dimensional displays, and enumerated certain laws of perceptual grouping that held them together. The *Gestalt* demonstrations remain compelling to this day, although the original interpretations of Wertheimer and his colleagues are not now widely accepted in perceptual psychology.

An insular position

Graham Reynolds

PRATAPADITYA PAL and VIDYA DEHEJIA
From Merchants to Emperors: British Artists and India 1757-1930
231pp. Cornell University Press. \$49.50.
08014 19077

One of the earliest British paintings to reach India was a miniature by Isaac Oliver, given by Sir Thomas Roe to Jahangir during his embassy of 1616 and 1617. The Emperor was much taken with it, but wagged that his court painter could make an indistinguishable copy. Since Roe failed immediately to pick out his original from five copies Jahangir "was very merry and joyful, and craked like a Northern man". When 150 years later British artists travelled to seek custom in India they showed no desire to emulate the Mughal painters by making deceptive copies of an alien art. Instead they clung immovably to their Western conceptions of form and materials. Their main forerunner was Tilly Kettle, a minor exponent of the style of Sir Joshua Reynolds, who made a fortune painting portraits in the 1770s. He was followed among figure painters by Johann Zoffany and William Hickey and among landscape painters by William Hodges and Thomas and William Daniell. By the end of the eighteenth century the days of certain prosperity were over. A final sparkle was provided by George Chinnery, who practised for twenty-three years as a portrait and landscape painter in Madras and Bombay before fleeing in 1825 to Macao to escape his wife and his debts. The future of British art in India lay in the hands of sporadic tourists such as Edward Lear and Mortimer Menpes, and with a dedicated band of amateur draughtsmen.

So characteristically insular an episode in the contacts between Eastern and Western cultures is the subject of this excellently produced publication. It records an exhibition which began at the Pierpont Morgan Library as part of the American Festival of India and has moved to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The contents are mostly works on paper, largely drawn from the Paul Walter collection, and the book is not a formal list of exhibits but a fully illustrated series of essays on the main themes covered by the display. Both the au-

thors were born in British India and bring a fresh eye to a field which, as the bibliography shows, has mainly been tended by Anglo-Saxons. Pratapaditya Pal tells us that he was born into an intensely nationalistic family but went to a prestigious school where he loved reading P. G. Wodehouse and playing cricket. Vidya Dehejia is the daughter of a prominent Indian official. Admitting a certain ambivalence in their attitude to the Raj, they have surveyed its artistic legacy with admirable detachment, displaying neither nostalgia nor resentment.

The most open-minded of the visiting artists was William Hodges, whose views of India encouraged Alexander Humboldt to embark on his travels. Hodges had experienced exotic cultures when he travelled with Cook's second expedition, and is almost alone among these British artists in recognizing that in India he was in the presence of a long and highly sophisticated civilization. Such receptivity was indeed exceptional. Most artists followed the rest of the expatriate community in maintaining a strict isolation from native concerns. It is hard to think of a parallel case in which the art of an occupying power has shown so little trace of an influence from the indigenous culture. Yet this extreme detachment may have enabled the British to perform one useful service. Their training disposed them to be curious about what they saw, to observe it carefully and to record it accurately, and this enabled them to make a record of manners and of monuments which might not otherwise have been available. In one of the most instructive chapters of their book the authors show how photographers had an early start in India and soon took over the recording of ancient monuments, as well as providing scope for the excellent landscapes of Samuel Bourne.

The British were dominant in India for some 200 years, a relatively short span in a history which stretches back beyond the invasion of the Aryans around 1500 bc. Impermeable in their self-imposed isolation, they played a part in the development of "Company" art, the native amalgam of British and popular Indian styles. Their own artistic legacy is a chapter in social observation rather than a separate strand in the development of art. It was beyond their powers to achieve a combination as brilliant as the interplay of Persian and Indian painting which produced the splendours of Mughal art.

For Arnheim the attraction of art is not simply the perception of pictures but also the manner in which the concepts contained in them are communicated. This distinction is elegantly, though indirectly, drawn in the first essay in the book, "Concerning the Adoration", whose subject is a small fifteenth-century painting by Giovanni di Paolo, which "connoisseurs of an earlier generation used to discuss with a condescending smile and a flourish of language". Arnheim takes the contrary view and treats it as a great work of art. The question is how to reconcile these divergent views of the same picture. Is Arnheim seeing the painting differently from the earlier connoisseurs, or are different *Gestalt* principles of vision in operation? This seems unlikely, as he stated twenty years ago that "The Gestalt laws hold without exception as all laws do, but their manifestations are often modified." In the case of di Paolo's painting it is the interpretations, the concepts it conveys, that have been modified.

It is in this regard that Arnheim has extended the perceptual dynamics of the *Gestalt* psychologists: he is not content to analyse the stimulus in isolation from the observer or the intent of the artist. The processes of abstraction and generalization operate at every level. Therefore, the task is one of evaluation and interpretation, for which the freedom of lan-



Gauguin's "Nevermore", 1897, is reproduced from *Impressionist and Post-Impressionist Masterpieces: The Courtauld Collection* by Dennis Farr, John House, Robert Bruce-Gardner, Gerry Hedley and Caroline Villers (49pp. Yale University Press. £20. 0300 03828 3).

Shifting relationships

Marcia Pointon

MELISSA MCQUILLAN
Impressionist Portraits
200pp. Thames and Hudson. £16.
0500 23469 8

Impressionist Portraits is a collection of excellent colour reproductions in large format accompanied by commentaries and an introduction. The collection is grouped chronologically under the headings "The early years", "The first Impressionist exhibition and after", and "New directions". Portraiture is probably the least-known area of activity among this most popular group of artists and Melissa McQuillan is at pains to establish the precise ways in which the treatment of their own and others' subjects was important for them. She also attempts to correct what she sees as a misreading of Impressionism resulting from the concentration of scholars on landscape at the expense of portraiture.

The accommodation of these images [portraits] within predominant conceptions of Impressionism unsettles our assumptions and encourages us to question the usefulness of purely stylistic criteria.

The portraits selected range from works which draw on a venerable tradition of depicting the artist in various media (music, painting or sculpture) as a commentary on the role and status of the artist in society, to intensely personal paintings such as Manet's "A Corner of an Apartment" (1875), in which the dimly lit figure of the artist's wife and child (for such we now know them to be) are perceived through a tent of foliage and curtains. Also included are paintings which can be seen as portraits only with hindsight: for example, Degas's remark-

guage is eminently suitable, and for which no outcome can be considered decisive. Thus it is that statements like "As long as we are dealing with art, perceptual experience remains the final objective and final judge", and "the arts fulfil, first of all, a cognitive function" can issue from the same pen.

Clearly Arnheim's definition of perceptual experience is somewhat broader than that adopted by most psychologists. There is no sharp distinction between perception and thinking, though they are examined experimentally in relative isolation, and the concepts from one do not necessarily translate to the other. The persistent thrust of Arnheim's essays is that they are much more clearly linked than is currently countenanced within psychology. None the less, the distinction between them is emphasized by the author's own styles: opposed pairs of terms like perception and reasoning, image and thought, intuition and intellect, memento and message, are constantly paraded for contrast only to be followed by their conflation. In practice, however, psychological data do not bear out such conflation, which is one reason why art and psychology remain difficult bedfellows. Professor Arnheim has tried, much harder than most, to cement the union between them, and his achievement is to be measured by these essays.

able close-up study of a café-concert singer known as Theresa, which was first exhibited as "Singer with a Glove" (1878).

McQuillan sensibly extends her coverage beyond the artists who exhibited with the Impressionist group to include Manet and Bazille. Because of the difficulty of defining what portraiture is, the choice of particular works is trickier. McQuillan overstates her case in insisting that Impressionist portraiture bears responsibility for the greater emphasis on personality that she identifies as a characteristic of the late nineteenth century. But she addresses matters of major importance when she discusses the shifting relationship between the painting of a portrait of a friend, or a member of the artist's family, and the execution of a narrative or subject painting in which the sitter happens to be a friend or relative.

"Almost every description of the human face asks at least to be considered as a portrait", remarks McQuillan, hedging her bets. But considered by whom, we must ask. And is it only the face that constitutes the portrait? The problem of identifying particular subjects is highlighted in the commentary on a painting by Caillebotte which was once thought to portray Monet but is now considered to be *le père* Magloire. The fashion for beards, the author tells us, does not assist the identification of males/iters. In drawing attention to the ways in which portraiture was used, to the distinctions between private and public functions, or to the changing meanings of, for example, a portrait of someone else's family "set adrift and homeless", this book, however modest its text, establishes some useful guidelines for the further reconsideration of Impressionism and for the serious examination of the portrait as a genre.

Up-market, down-market

Anthony Howard

JEFFREY HOGREFE
"Wholly Unacceptable": The bitter battle for Sotheby's
224pp. Harrop. £9.95.
0245 54459 3

On the East Side of Manhattan, a few blocks from its old proud premises on Madison Avenue, Sotheby's still maintains a presence — just. Past glories are represented by a dingy five-storey office block bordering on First Avenue, labelled simply "Sotheby's. Founded 1744". Despite the odd chandelier visible through the windows, this gloomy 76th Street site seems a

far cry from the elegance of Sotheby's traditional carriage-trade headquarters in New Bond Street, London.

It is in New York that the command post of the auction house is now to be found. Sotheby's, having turned the American auction firm of Parke Bernet Galleries into virtually a crown colony in 1964, itself came under American control in 1983. The public proof of that lies in a vast complex of sale-rooms and show-rooms (converted from a Kodak film-processing plant) standing near the East River in the cultural desert of York Avenue. The mere existence of this vulgar emporium is in itself a visible sign that "Fings ain't what they used to be". Sotheby's, like Christie's, has been through some troubled times recently and this book, originally published in America in 1985, is the chronicle of some of them. In fact, though, it is not so much a chronicle as a tract — a tract with a strong anti-British-Establishment flavour.

The crisis for Sotheby's came in 1982-3 when, after various management deficiencies, it found itself the subject of a takeover bid by two young Americans named Cogan and Swid from New Jersey, who had made something of a name in the world felt market. Their bid was eventually repulsed and Sotheby's fell instead to another, even more robust American trader, Henry A. Taubman, a real estate developer from the state of Michigan. He became (somewhat improbably) the "White Knight" riding to the rescue of the directors of the British auc-

tion house, headed by the Earl of Westmorland, who had assumed control after the twenty-one-year reign of Peter Wilson.

Jeffrey Hogrefe begins his narrative in the era of Wilson, who died in retirement in the south of France in 1984. His death frees Hogrefe to speculate — as others have done before him — about Wilson's possible links with Anthony Blunt, and to suggest that his somewhat abrupt departure from the chairmanship of Sotheby's at the very beginning of 1980 may not have been entirely voluntary (Blunt's exposure as a traitor had come in the autumn of 1979). This part of the book is at least intriguing, although confidence in Hogrefe's judgments is not increased by his failure to spell correctly the Christian name of the curious (and, to some, sinister) art dealer, Thomas Harris. After that, however, it is downhill all the way. Hogrefe appoints himself counsel for Cogan and Swid — disparagingly written off, he claims, by the old Sotheby's board, as "the Felt Fellows from New Jersey" — and the theme of his book is that they were the victims of British Establishment snobbery and antisemitism.

The need to sustain this thesis leads him into some wild by-ways, including a ludicrous suggestion that the Queen herself may well have been responsible for the referral of the original Cogan and Swid bid to the Monopolies Commission, thereby depriving them of their well-earned prize just as they were poised for victory. But the real flaw in his argument lies in the nature and character of the ultimate victor

POETIC INDIVIDUALITY IN THE MIDDLE AGES

PETER DRONKE, A REVISED EDITION

From mediaeval to modern times, the study of the poet has been a central theme in literary criticism. This book, which is now in its second edition, is a landmark work in the field.

The book is published by the University of Chicago Press, and is available in paperback and hardcover. It is a must-read for anyone interested in the history of literature.

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Behind the lines

Lorna Sage

The Commonwealth Institute laid on an absurdly optimistic introduction to 1987 by running a day-long Women Writers' Workshop to coincide with the beginning of the big freeze. Still, around a hundred paying participants churned out to meet the writers in question – some well known (Anita Desai, Fleur Bacock), others less so (Beryl Gilroy from Guyana, the Australian poet Katherine Galagher); and to discuss the work of Bessie Head who died (tragically early at forty-eight) last year, as did Olga Master, who had only started publishing fiction in her fifties. In the last decade, when she won all the available antipodean prizes.

The Institute persistently demonstrates (this is their fourth annual tribute to Commonwealth women writers) what others occasionally preach, celebrate or deplore: the Empire in the act of striking back, the plurality of cultures, styles, voices in English, the existence of an audience that is not ethnocentric. It is very worthy, as you can anyway tell from the pocked face of its 1962 building in Kensington High Street, with its forest of gently-rocking flagpoles on the windy, confusing forecourt, its post-imperial halls, its absence of heating. Workshop participants wondered whether the boiler hadn't been sabotaged by sexist, but no; – that's the house style, of a place with the fact that you have to leave the building to get to the bar, or with the assault course for the disabled, or the leaking roof of beautiful Zambian copper which shrinks every winter.

1987 is the Institute's Silver Jubilee year (twenty-five years in this "Pavilion in the Park", which is how Westminster Council dreams of it), and perhaps unsurprisingly its directors seized the occasion to do something about the building, which currently resembles nothing so much as one of those sad "ecumenical" shrines deserted by every god. The programme of educational and cultural events and exhibitions has developed despite

the architecture, out of a strange little corner once devoted to objects and artifacts you could touch, known as "the handling room" – and it retains some of that directness. Participants are mostly not students or academics, but "general readers" and would-be writers, some of them with nostalgic exile ties, some belonging to conscious "minorities". What they don't do is simply line up to discuss their own national literatures in terms of their own critical fashions, which is what happens at the grand triennial conferences of the Association of Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (Leavisite students of Indian literature and feminist-deconstructionist New Zealanders in simultaneous parallel sessions).

The Institute's Caribbean Writing Conference last October, by contrast, produced a characteristically agonized anti-apartheid "declaration" – "Wars have been fought on less provocation than our brothers and sisters have been enduring in South Africa, and while we declare our abhorrence of violence in any form . . ." – signed, among many others, by the writers Earl Lovelace, James Berry, Grace Nichols and John Agard, the publishers Vicky Unwin and Margaret Busby and (on behalf of the Poetry Society) Dannie Abse and Alan Brownjohn.

The Women Writers' Workshop was more quietly angry. The tone was set by Delhi novelist Anita Desai (twice shortlisted for the Booker Prize, currently a Visiting Fellow at Girton College, Cambridge) who looked out at the freezing sleet, and said carefully, in answer to a question about why the hero of her last novel, *In Custody*, was so tragically inept, first that her India was populated by "characters" just like him, and secondly that in India "knowing what one desires does not bring one any closer, but simply adds to the anguish." There wasn't, she said, enough of anything to go around – not enough Shakespearean tragic grandeur for instance, "tragedy has become much more flattened out, shared out among more people". *In Custody* (currently being made into a Merchant-Ivory film) also features an Urdu poet deprived of his audience by the historical "accident" of Partition, which has marginalized his language; Desai herself writes in English, a world language which none the less excludes whole areas of Indian life, all that is rural, traditional and customary. That last theme has been the subject of most literary events at the Institute, the ubiquitous, colonizing medium itself. Sidestepping it – though hardly avoiding the cultural "frames" – they will be celebrating their jubilee with a spring exhibition of "Images", photographs by the regional winners in a new photography competition. (Information, particularly on how to join the "Friends" of the Institute – £10 a year for access to discounts, study holidays, newsletter – from Jill Gale 01-603 4335.)

"Targetted" poetry-buyers, identified by some secret formula no doubt, will be receiving in the mail first copies of the *Poetry Catalogue*.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 312

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than February 12. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct – in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor: *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on February 20.

*I am one granddame evening, after a great morning and his good supper of gammon and spiltish; having labelled his eyes, policed his nostrils, undischarged his ears and pelleted his throat, he put on his impermeable, seized his impregnable harpoon on his crown and stepped out of his immobile *De Rure Abba*.*

I showed the timber up, for my own sake, and in building, I the other to the top that (Jacob, Benedict's rendering of).

heralding a new international mail-order business, launched by Desmond Clarke and Matthew Huntley, and dreamed up by Clarke on his long tours promoting Faber poets. It was revealed to him, despite the most modern of marketing strategies, how very difficult it is to get poetry into bookshops: "What's the point of taking Craig Raine to Wellington, New Zealand, if there are only six copies of his book in the country?" Clarke is (most uncharacteristically) admitting defeat: booksellers rely more and more on "impulse buying", and on selling best-sellers, and despite the evidence – Wendy Cope, Vikram Seth and Douglas Dunn all made the 1986 best-seller lists – they grudge poets shelf space, possibly recalling T. S. Eliot's gloomy saying, that the aim in publishing poetry was to lose as little money as possible.

In any case, the Austrian, Japanese and American readers Clarke expects to make up half of his projected mailing list certainly cannot be currently reached through bookshops. Direct retail sales to individuals cut across international copyright agreements, and given the support of British publishers, large and small, the catalogue – which is free and will come out twice a year – stands a chance of reaching some of the 30 per cent of would-be book buyers who go into a shop and come out without the title they wanted (this piece of market research, which he undertook for the Book Marketing Council in 1979, has haunted Clarke ever since).

Other possible future developments include specially priced editions, exclusive to catalogue subscribers, and, in the autumn, a second catalogue of literary fiction and biography. The writers listed won't be – judging from the first number – in the least obscure, merely routinely unobtainable. The whole scheme depends of course on the post, which makes it sound curiously old-fashioned; though in America it's the way they're selling business books these days. And poetry is potentially big business: at the moment the retail value of poetry sold by British publishers is two million pounds a year. *The Poetry Catalogue* can be ordered from 11 College Street, Winchester SO23 9LZ9. Telephone enquiries 12 to 5 pm, 0962-64710.)

The Institute of Contemporary Arts is forty this year, and so quite old enough to have a history – though given its style of self-definition ("a sanctuary for new ideas") the fortieth birthday celebrations have a post-modern flavour, all about picking out images from the past *ad libitum* and conjuring them into presentness. There was, famously, the first-ever ICA exhibition in the basement of the Academy cinema, which itself caught up on forty years of modern art (Ernst, Picasso, Braque, Moore); some recall with special delight *Cybernetic Serendipity*, which celebrated Information Technology and saw out the 1960s. Others reminisce about the other Picasso exhibition (the "porn") in the early 1970s, whose opening – so goes the story – elicited a telephone call from

the head of Westminster CID saying he was planning to pay it a visit at eight o'clock on the first morning; whereupon it turned out that he wanted to catch the show before leaving for his honeymoon. And more recently, of course, the American Karen Finlay's Performance was noisily hounded out by the *Sun* and the *Daily Mail* to reopen in New York with the proud boast "banned in London".

The ICA needs to consolidate its position, and also to stay "on the edge". The result is a bit like a mid-life crisis. On the one hand a "development campaign" (with a committee headed by Kingman Brewster and Sir Hugh Casson), to raise a million pounds by the end of the year, some of which will go to acquiring two more floors of its present building on the Mall, and generally to setting their house in order, some to establishing a "stabilization fund" which is designed to rescue them from constant deficits. On the other hand, the bricks and mortar and the end of the overdraft themselves constitute a threat ("is not creativity society's true capital?") and they're planning to break out of their four walls in various directions: ICA videos have been on sale for a while; and now ICATV has been set up as an independent production company to make films for television and cable, the first of which (*The Real Me* directed by Christopher Rawlence) will immortalize a Michael Nyman opera already staged at the ICA, based on Oliver Sachs's *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, plus the rotting vegetation which was part of Hela Chadwick's work on female identity, and which left such nasty, possibly indelible, stains on the carpet last year.

The first fortieth anniversary exhibition – *The State of the Art* (to be reviewed shortly in the *TLS*) – also aspires to escape the gallery: later in the year it will go on tour to Newcastle, Preston, Bradford and Norwich) and it is currently paralleled by a Channel Four documentary series. The theme is – what else – international postmodernism: being, as it turns out, no longer bound to complete the project of modernity, nor yet free to forget it. *The State of the Art* is at the ICA Gallery, The Mall, London W1 until March 1 from 12.00 pm daily.

History ended in 1930, according to the Romantic Novelists' Association, which has just launched a new prize of £2,000. The first winner will be announced in April, and will be selected from nominations in two categories: Modern (post-1930) and Historical. The RNA, which has 350 members, many of them best-sellers, may have been established in 1960, but takes the long view: "after all, had the association existed in Jane Austen's time, she would surely have qualified for membership", says their press release. Authors of loose, baggy monsters, it seems, need not apply – one of the judges, Patience Bulkeley, is the editor of *Stimming Magazine*. (Enquiries to Fiona Spencer Thomas, Promotion Services, 709 Beatty House, Dolphin Square, London SW1.)

And O the wicked fool I seemed in every kind of way,
To be here and huddling frozen ropes on blessed Christmas Day.

R. L. Stevenson, "Christmas at Sea".

High noon behind the tamarisks – the sun is hot above us –
As at Home the Christmas Day is breaking wan.
They will drink our healths at dinner – those who tell us how they love us

And forget us, till another year be gone!

Rudyard Kipling, "Christmas in India".

A nice fellow called Harold Mellor, who is staying at Cannes, comes over constantly to see me. He is a nephew of Mrs Jacob Bright's. He has a pretty Italian boy with him. They stayed last night at Naples, and we had a plum-pudding and Mellor, ordered Pomme-Grain so I kept Christmas pleasantly, and Christmas improves by being kept a day. On the real Christmas I almost alone.

Oscar Wilde, letter of December 27, 1898 to Robert Ross.

Letters

Wagner's Antisemitism

Sir, – Jacob Katz may disagree with John Deatherage on what we are to make of Richard Wagner's antisemitism (Letters, January 9), but they both assume that it can only be properly assessed by reference to his influence on the Nazis (about which they disagree).

Much though I sympathize with Professor Katz in general and think that he is right to emphasize the importance of Cosima Wagner's *Diaries* for an understanding of Wagner's mentality towards the end of his life, his application of a variety of Whig interpretation is somewhat misleading.

Cosima's *Diaries* reveal her husband's repetitive and virulent antisemitism, but they are also first-rate sources (along with his later publications in the *Bayreuther Blätter*) for the understanding of Wagner's expectations about the future. What is clear is that he was convinced of the triumph of liberalism, rationalism, racial and religious tolerance, the whole nexus of ideas he disapproved as "modern", and that his vituperation was a reflection of his impotent despair before the future he assumed inevitable.

We know, not least through the researches of Professor Katz on the background to the Holocaust, that the liberal consensus was far more fragile and superficial than Wagner would have expected, but, surely, if a historian is to judge Wagner rather than to locate him on the path to Auschwitz, he must take into account his intentions, deeds and expectations of influence or the lack of it, rather than the future of which he could know nothing. Wagner's prejudices would be repellent without Hitler.

MARK ALMOND.

Wolfson College, Oxford.

Rich and Poor in London

Sir, – In his interesting review (January 2) of Donald J. Olsen's *The City as a Work of Art* Michael Ignatieff quotes the author as correcting the idea of a nineteenth-century London geographically divided between rich and poor, but goes on to say that the twentieth-century pattern of council building has "canted the poor away from the rich".

Yet one of the main policies, certainly as far as London is concerned, has been to avoid this: anyone who walks in the area around the always rich and fashionable Cheyne Walk in Chelsea can see how successfully a social

conjunction (though hardly mix) has been maintained. The same is true of many other areas of different character, for example Fitzrovia and Bloomsbury: a visitor from abroad might be forgiven for thinking that the new British Library is being built exclusively for the poor, abutting as it does on to council estates to the west and north.

ADRIENNE TOWNSEND.
40 Dickinson Road, Manca, Cambridgeshire.

Churton Collins

Sir, – I was pleased, of course, to see the reference to my biography of Edmund Gosse in Neil Berry's review of Anthony Kearney's biography of Churton Collins, *The Louse on the Locks of Literature* (January 9). I have not yet had the chance to see Kearney's book, but I cannot imagine it gives Berry justification for perpetuating the myth that Tennyson used the phrase which is Kearney's title. As Christopher Ricks first pointed out, the words Tennyson actually used were "He's a jacksass, that's what he is. But don't say I said so." Gosse recorded this in a letter to his wife the very next day; but Gosse, being Gosse, not only passed on Tennyson's opinion of Collins to the world but embroidered it. Edward Marsh assures us that he heard the phrase from Gosse's own lips, and Osbert Sitwell passed on the story in *Noble Essences*. The phrase derives from Smollett in *Humphry Clinker*: "a half-starved house of literature". Of course Tennyson might possibly have used the phrase on some other occasion, but all the evidence suggests it was Gosse, not Tennyson, who used it of Churton Collins.

ANN THWAITE.

The Mill House, Low Tharston, Norwich.

'Ace of Clubs'

Sir, – It is unfortunate that Richard Hough chose the title *Ace of Clubs* for his history of the Garrick Club (December 26, 1986). "Ace of Clubs" was Mark Twain's description of the Lotos Club in New York City when Twain was a member there at the turn of the century. Lotos Club members today take a proprietary interest in the phrase.

This is not a reflection on the Garrick; indeed, at the present time relations between the two clubs are excellent and members of each enjoy reciprocal privileges.

JOHN W. OSBORNE.
24 Helen Avenue, West Orange, New Jersey 07052.

FIFTY YEARS ON

The TLS of January 16, 1937, carried a review by D. L. Murray of The Diary of Vaslav Nijinsky, edited by Romola Nijinsky, from which the following extracts are taken:

The diaries of Vaslav Nijinsky form a pendant to the biography recently published by his wife. They belong to the period of his breakdown and seclusion, having been written in 1918 and 1919, but to consider them primarily as a document of mental disease is to approach them from a wrong angle. Those who remember Nijinsky in the fullness of his powers will recollect that besides being a dancer whose physical equipment made him capable of feats (had he wished to indulge in them) more like those of acrobats than the ballet, and a choreographer of a startling modernistic genius, he was also a tragic actor of an extraordinary emotional capacity. Indeed his dramatic gifts might, had his career followed its natural course, have proved in the end his greatest endowment. Such a capacity for feeling is never without its peril; it needs a very stable mind and character to control it.

In his diary he reveals to us the same sensitive soul, dominated by "feeling" – the word recurs again and again in his musings – and unable to dam the flood of emotion so as to maintain his mental balance. But it would be a great pity to confuse what is fundamentally a state of exalted mysticism (of a familiar type in Russia) with the mere megalomania common among mental patients. When Nijinsky, among other phrases, says "I am God; in a prayer, I am God in Man"; "I am Christ's policy"; "I am Christ"; he is expressing, if would be less a *folie des grandeurs* than an overwhelming sense of mystical union with the Di-

vine, a pantheistic consciousness. And this accords with the sentiment of universal love or harmony which penetrates him wholly, enabling him to forgive those whom he believes to have harmed him most.

To a mind possessed by this feeling of mystical unity with all humankind, the War was clearly a shattering experience. Nijinsky makes pathetically naive notes on the leading statesmen of the period, Wilson, Clemenceau, Mr Lloyd George, putting faith here and awarding blame there according to his simple instincts. In fact the whole of modern life was progressively wounding to his soul. He could not bear the commercialization of art and the theatre (and thought the cinema especially guilty in this respect) and the growing dominance of mechanism. He, the birdman, could not but look with terror on the aeroplane.

Steel is a necessary thing, but it is also a terrible thing. An aeroplane is a terrible thing. I flew in an aeroplane and cried in it. I do not know why, but I felt that aeroplanes destroy birds.

A divine humanity, a solidarity of universal love, a hatred of plutocracy, a dread of the mechanization of life, a revulsion from the sensuality of sex, based on sad experiences – these ideas, though expressed with exaggeration and naivety, and accompanied undoubtedly by delusions (such as the notion that it would be possible for him to fight the Stock Exchanges of the world with their own weapons), do not make Nijinsky's diaries a mere document of among mental patients. When Nijinsky, in a prayer, says "I am God; in a prayer, I am God in Man"; "I am Christ's policy"; "I am Christ"; he is expressing, if would be less a *folie des grandeurs* than an overwhelming sense of mystical union with the Di-

Bedtime Reading

Sir, – Publishers are obviously fighting a rear-guard action in a post-literate society; but are they capable of winning? Almost every new novel these days is full of misprints, transposed lines and grammatical and stylistic gaffes, as if no one had bothered – or known how – to read it.

In some cases the mistakes seem to have sprung from a profound sympathy between compositor and sub-text – as when the female personal pronoun comes under attack in John Updike's *Roger's Version*: "Her", for example, turning into "His" on page 92 ("His ginger red hair and its prim do had been loosened and fluffed by the work and heat of cooking; her bluffed eyes . . ."), "here" on page 99. But elsewhere, everyone has apparently just dozed. It may be that P. D. James intended some High Anglican ritualistic bell to be sounded in the threefold repetition of the phrase "Dalglish felt Kate stiffen" in *A Taste for Death*, but the duplication within twenty pages (269, 286) of "Suddenly she almost liked him" suggests something less artful, and on Faber and Faber's part, less alert. Suddenly they were still asleep.

ANGUS POOL.
c/o 102 Savernake Road, London NW3.

Salt-cellars

Sir, – I notice that the present edition of Partridge's *Dictionary of Slang* gives, under "salt-cellar", "(Gen. pl.) A very deep hollow, above the collar-bone, in the female neck: coll.: from ca. 1912. *OED Sup.*"

The usage must have been current considerably earlier. Depicting a character in their novel *The Image of His Father* (1851), Henry and Augustus Mayhew write that "one felt convinced that under the scanty black German-velvet cape she then wore, lay concealed two 'salt-cellars', as they are called, in which martins might have built".

PETER READING.
Ragley View, Little Streiton, Salop.

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Iain Bamforth's volume of poems, *The Modern Copernicus*, was published in 1984.

Anthony Beaver's most recent novel is *The Pausanias Pact*, 1983. His *The Spanish Civil War* was published in 1982.

A. S. Byatt's novel, *Sill Life*, 1985, was recently reissued in paperback.

James K. Cameron is Professor of Ecclesiastical History at the University of St Andrews. Stefan Collini is the author, with Donald Winch and John Burrow, of *That Noble Science of Politics: A study in nineteenth-century intellectual history*, 1983.

Philip Collins is Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Leicester. His books include *Charles Dickens: The public readings*, 1975.

Patricia Craig's biography of Elizabeth Bowen was published last year in the Penguin Lives of Modern Women series.

C. S. L. Davies is a Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford. His books include *Peace, Print and Protestantism 1450-1558*, 1976, in the *Paladin History of England* series.

Euan Dunn is an editor of the *Birds of the Western Palearctic* series, the fifth volume of which will be published later this year.

Garth Fowden's *The Egyptian Hermes: A historical approach to the late pagan mind* has recently been published.

Tim Halliday is Reader in Biology at the Open University, and author of *Sexual Strategy*, 1980.

Michael Hofmann's most recent collection of poems, *Acrimony*, was published last year.

Anthony Howard is Deputy Editor of the *Observer*.

Gavin Lyall's most recent thriller, *The Crocus Liri*, 1985, appeared in paperback last year.

Edward Mendelson's edition of the plays of W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood will be published next year.

Jonathan Mirkov is the China specialist of the *Observer*.

David Nokes's *Jonathan Swift: A hypocrite reversed* was published in 1985.

Edward Norman's most recent book is *Roman Catholicism in England: From the Elizabethan settlement to the Edwardian Council*, 1985. His *The Victorian Christian Socialists* will be published next year.

Marcia Polinton is the author of *The Bonington Circle: English watercolour and the Anglo-French landscape 1790-1855*, 1985.

Peter Reading's *Essential Reading*, and his most recent collection of poems, *Ster*, were published last year.

Grubham Reynolds's *The Later Paintings and Drawings of John Constable* was published in 1984.

John Richetti is the author of *Deja's Narratives: Situations and structures*, 1975.

Mark Ridley's *Animal Behaviour* was published last year.

Andrew Sanders is the author of *Charles Dickens: Resurrectionist*, 1982.

James Sargall's *In the Company of Animals* will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the *TLS*.

Lary Shaffer is Associate Professor of Psychology at the State University of New York.

Arthur Sheps is Professor of History at the University of Toronto.

Michael Sprinker teaches literary criticism at the State University of New York. His *Imaginary Relations: Aesthetics and Ideology in the theory of historical materialism* will be published later this year.

Norman Stone is Professor of Modern History at the University of Oxford.

John Ure's *Trepassers on the Amazon* was published last year.

Nicholas Wade is Reader in Psychology at the University of Dundee, and author of *The Art and Science of Visual Illusions*, 1982.

Christina Walkley's *The Way to Wear 'Em: 150 years of "Punch" on costume* was published last year.

John Walsh is Curator of the J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, California.

Keith Wrightson is a Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, and author of *English Society 1580-1680*, 1982. He is co-editor of *The World We Have Gained: Histories of population and social structure*, which was published last year.

COMMENTARY

Slavonic stratagems

Lesley Chamberlain

STEPHEN POLIAKOFF
Coming In To Land
Lyttelton theatre

The Britain revealed through a Polish woman's entanglement with the immigration authorities is a decaying, media-saturated consumer society with a cunning, occasionally ruthless bureaucracy, racial tensions and an undying imperial institutional jolliness at its worst around Christmas. The graduate professional class, shored up against misery with high-tech living and a knowledge of procedures, is liable to bouts of *fin-de-siècle* ennui and pricks of conscience. Thus Andrew, an impudible Shell man by day, turns into a squadron-leader dogooder helping would-be immigrants by night. Under implausibly little pressure his pink-tied old university friend, the lawyer Neville, unable to face too much reality in the shape of hurt girlfriends, agrees to a *marriage blanc* with Halina Rodziewiczówna and lets her move into his penthouse flat. Thereafter nothing quite goes according to plan, leaving Stephen Poliakoff ample opportunity to undo certainties all round.

Maggie Smith as Halina, swaddled in woolies and clutching plastic bags, makes a memorable entry as the gauche and unpredictable East European country cousin. Quick on the uptake, she exploits her Slavonic reputation for mistiness and whimsy to the hilt, acquiring a taste for luxury and involuntarily changing everybody as fast as she changes her clothes and her stories. Neville, invaded and intrigued, basks in self-satisfied cool as she tells her tale of family political demise and a thwarted career, but by the time she has added some whopping lies he has moved closer to sincerity and she to manipulative deviousness. The cycling, suicide-shod immigration officer Peirce begins nastily, passes through biscuit-nibbling humanity and finally emerges from Halina's ambit a tired but unshakeable idealist, devoted to his job. One cannot escape the feeling of sitting in class. Andrew goes to an end-of-century party where everyone is got up in black-and-white and bored. Presumably the invitees are playing truant from didactic theatre.

Coming In To Land, which seems to have

grown out of a preoccupation with East-West relations and British immigration, is a dryish conflation of the transient images, stories and lies, magnified by media hype, which keep people and cultures apart. Halina exploits this fiction market for all it's worth. Her admirable creative range reaches a high point when she borrows the experience of a mock execution from Dostoevsky. There is also a good moment where, being East Bloc streetwise about bureaucracy and corruption, she confronts Peirce, who is running a Kafkaesque circus of frustration outside his office, with a mirror image of his professional escapology.

Halina's stratagems don't make for much of a plot, however, and a lesser actress might not carry off the mixture of personality and pretence so effectively. Her role is to be a self-confessed "spiky" (provocative, challenging) East European. We need the word because Neville is somewhat clumsily given to complaining that he has become impaled upon her. One of the main shortcomings of this play is that it is not, in its urgent desire to make black and white grey, essentially dramatic. Instead it is quite funny, and by moving on from sitcom to sitcom resembles a soap opera with an intellectual conscience. We see Halina learning the ropes in an empty video shop, facing Peirce and being detained deafeningly close to Heathrow, but at the expense of any focus on change from the inside. Halina's fears for herself are delivered in a speech so overdose she might have been play-acting for Neville.

The central drama makes no progress. When the curtain falls on Halina and Neville it is about to begin. With twenty years and vastly different cultures separating them, they have at last broken through to each other, and agreed to be themselves. It is a convenient way for the playwright to say: disregard all those clichés I have given you about East-West, whimsicality versus reason; real life is about to begin, to which my play is only a well-produced (by Peter Hall) and very well-acted prolegomenon. Anthony Andrews makes much of Neville's youthful, still divertible freshness and Tim Pigott-Smith lends his ambiguous and mirthfully insinuating eyes to Peirce, but the whole has the shape and atmosphere of a documentary television play. The attack on the media is overdone to the point of physical discomfort, given NT acoustics and eighteen small screens on stage.

Speaking for themselves

Dora Thornton

Siegfried Sassoon
Hampstead Theatre

The impetus behind Peter Barkworth's performance clearly comes from a long-standing personal love of Sassoon's writings. This selection of readings, in which there is no attempt at dramatic representation, is his contribution to mark the centenary of Sassoon's birth. "I wanted his prose and poetry to speak for themselves, and to be as free from... additives or artificial colourings as possible", Barkworth explains in his programme note.

He maintains this restraint with perfect tact until the moment when he acts out the diary account of the raid on German trenches at Mametz in May 1916 which gained Sassoon his Military Cross. Trying to recreate the attempt to bring in a wounded soldier, Barkworth writhes on the floor in an ungainly sprawl. This point, at which he breaks his self-imposed limits of interpretation, is the weakest in his performance.

In reality Sassoon's fellow-soldiers were stunned by his apparent coolness and studied air of front detachment. The morning after this raid, he wrote in his diary that he was "feeling as if I'd been to a dance - awful mouth and head". Irony was an essential distancing device which Sassoon learnt to manipulate with skill; it is part of his authentic voice as a writer on war. Peter Barkworth finds this tone difficult to manage, but in every other respect his light, unemphatic stage presence serves him well.

The reading begins with the opening of *The Old Century*, in which the poet mimics his seven-year-old self describing a rare visit from his father, and the affectionate, teasing tone of the self-portrait is reproduced with sensitivity and humour. A radio adaptation of the book would suit Barkworth's talents perfectly. Good mileage is also made out of Sassoon's account of his conventionally sterile education at Marlborough and Cambridge. It was only after 1916 that life forced a response from Sassoon which produced the first of his war poems. The second half of the evening opens with superb readings of "The General" and "Base Details", the poems in which Sassoon found his characteristic idiom - the language of the common soldier set against the complacent speech of staff and civilians.

Sassoon's evocations, such as the memory of the time when he and David Thomas shared rooms ("I think of him at Cambridge last August when we lived together four weeks in Pembroke College in rooms where the previous occupant's name, Paradise, was written above the door") - are beautifully conveyed. Rupert Hart-Davis's edition of the *War Diaries* makes it possible for Barkworth to interleave Sassoon's three types of description of one event, such as the death and burial of David Thomas ("Dick Tilwood"); Hart-Davis had already provided Barkworth with the telling juxtaposition of Sassoon's letter of protest with that to his commanding officer, demonstrating how defiance could coexist with a traditional sense of honour. Barkworth has profited by making his selection an introduction to Sassoon's work as a whole, not simply to that of "the young soldier-poet".

The fruits of despair

Michael Hofmann

The Sacrifice
Lumière cinema

Despite its long running-time and essayistic freight, *The Sacrifice* may be reduced to a short parable: the man who sets his own house on fire has a son whom he has taught to water a dead tree, and who will go on doing so when his father is gone. The film begins and ends with the tree, a tall and spindly pine. It is dedicated, "with hope and confidence", to Andrei Tarkovsky's son Andriyosha.

The fruit that falls away from this hard, poetic core is strangely soft, mealy and half-hearted. At times, it seems as though Tarkovsky has pitched his film as far as possible from where he means it to go, and set himself the most arduous and circuitous journey. *The Sacrifice* is a plea to man to unhouse himself, and yet its stars are the two houses where most of it is shot, among old glass and old wood, wrought iron bedsteads and the liquid, waxy run of floorboards. It is about personal duty and personal salvation (the house and the tree), and yet in form it is a chamber piece and has taken on board half a dozen clamorous and ill-differentiated characters. It is against words, and yet it has a chattering screenplay of fifth-rate Chekhov, full of gripes and complaints, containing long passages of boned "philosophizing" as Chekhov deprecatingly called it. It is anti-materialistic, and yet the best part of it is in the solid, sombre photography of Sven Nykvist with a noisy and physical soundtrack. It is clearly Eastern in orientation - one thinks of the Hindu pattern of old age, giving away one's possessions, leaving one's house and becoming a beggar - and yet there are only two hints at this: Alexander's black yin-and-yang kimono, and someone's *mot* about Gandhi having one day a week on which he would not speak.

Instead, it is shot on Gotland in the Baltic Sea, along the nuclear corridor of flatlands that runs down from Scandinavia through East Anglia and the Low Countries to Bavaria. It bothers

Photogenic forays

David Nokes

LAURIE LEE
As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning
BBC2

"I was nineteen years old, still soft at the edges", recalls Laurie Lee at the start of his narration of this two-part film, adapted by himself from the book of the same title. The film is not only soft at the edges but soft right through, a lyrical sequence of postcard scenes and idyllic reminiscences. There is an unexplicated irony in the contrast between the voice of the narrative, wistful and elegiac, and the naive enthusiasm of the young adventurer whom we see on the screen. Lee reads his voice-over in accents as mellow as a wrinkled pippin; while John Wild in the role of his adolescent *alter ego*, with implausibly neat blond hair and a violin tucked under his arm, swaggers the nut-strewn roads like one of nature's aristocrats.

Admirers of Laurie Lee may well find enchantment in the film's lush style, and refreshment in the evocation of a life of peasant simplicities. Disappointingly, however, the film has chosen to omit all those counter-indications of irony and social realism, which, in the book, keep the more self-indulgent elements of Lee's romanticism in check. In the book, Lee's experiences of the doss-houses and building-sites of 1930s England bring him briefly into contact with the worlds of Robert Tresselt and George Orwell. There are moments of down-and-out social comedy, as when he contrasts the 18 pence gained from busking at Littlehampton with the 38 shillings received for playing spiritual airs in Worthing, a town described as "a kind of Cheltenham-on-Sea, full of rich, pearl-choked invalids". There are also some touches of self-mockery, as when he pictures himself as a young poet in a Soho cafe, hold-

ing a copy of the *Heraldo de Madrid* which he couldn't read and a cup of Turkish coffee which he couldn't drink. The film has none of this human detail, relying instead on long, panning shots of landscape. We are shown the happy wanderer's first glimpse of London as a shimmering vision, tinted with washes of pink and gold; in the book, more prosaically, we are told of a less glamorous entry into the capital: "In the end I took a tube."

The same process of visual idealization characterizes the treatment of Spain. Where the book juxtaposes moments of rhapsody and social realism, the film makes little attempt to vary the tone of nostalgic travelogue. Towards the end, the book details the ominous political skirmishings which preceded civil war, but the film barely mentions the approach of war, and the most ominous thing which Lee encounters is the keening wind of the sirocco. The peasants with whom he finds an instant, wordless rapport are noble, generous and full of simple vitality. If ugly, their ugliness is Hogarthian; if cruel, their cruelty is a form of primitive justice. Virtually without dialogue, the film isolates the youthful Lee in his romantic fantasy and turns the actor Wild into a puppet of the narration. Significantly, one of his longest conversations is a dialogue of sentimental gestures with a deaf-mute. For the rest, the people of Spain remain as icons, an animated landscape of primitive types. His most intense experiences involve not people but nature: He describes bathing naked in a mountain stream - "I was never so alive again". Yet, in its concentration on photogenic effects the film runs a familiar risk of competing with the descriptive hyperbole of the narrative. A purple evening, "juicy as a grape", looks merely picturesque on screen. The jagged peastone around Vigo, we are told, "looked like sweepings of broken glass"; but what we see presented is a twilight seascape straight out of a tourist brochure.

Tarkovsky's care and intensity in visual and tonal compositions are always more impressive than the organization and writing of the film. Perhaps his point is to load us with things we only want to ignore, to let us hear endless, meaningless chatter, to show us the soft fruit of modern life and show it collapsing. It is only by having to endure all that, that we are privileged to see his blue grass, to hear distant foghorns (the most articulate things in the film) and the singing of glasses shaken on a tray, and to watch the lovely effect whereby light and wind come in together through sheeted windows and doors.

Anyone who picks up *Spanish Front* expecting to find hundreds of pages of rousing nostalgia will be bewildered by the selections in Valentine Cunningham's anthology, although not at the start. The first twenty pages are reassuring and conventional. Auden's "Spain" serves as an overture, summarizing the drama that will follow: "Yesterday all the past", "today the struggle", "tomorrow, perhaps the future". The curtain rises and we are immediately among the participants and eye-witnesses. George Orwell arrives at the Lenin Barracks. Stephen Spender professes his Communist faith on the eve of his departure for Valencia. Carl Manzini accompanies a trainload of eager volunteers for the International Brigade. John Sommerfield joins another group of volunteers on a perilous journey by sea. Urgency and crisis agitate the air. Then, abruptly, the illusion breaks. The next selection comes from a book review in which Orwell dismisses Sommerfield's story - the one that had absorbed us a moment before - as "sentimental tripe". Cyril Connolly, in the selection that follows, counters by praising Sommerfield as "an excellent writer". T. C. Worsley then remarks, apropos of Sommerfield: "It was quite a common thing in Spain for people to behave not as if they were themselves in the Spanish war, but as if they were characters from Hemingway's forthcoming (?) novel on the Spanish war". The lights have come up in the theatre of History, and the stagehands, in full view of the audience, are conducting a debate about acting style.

The Spanish Civil War, in this anthology, begins as a war of words and develops into a war about words. Nancy Cunard solicits a few hundred contributions for the pamphlet *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War*; Orwell denounces the whole enterprise as "bloody rot"; Connolly dissects the contributors' diction; Graham Greene, instead of reviewing the pamphlet, recalls the Spanish adventures of Tennyson and Hallam. Evelyn Waugh writes in to the *New Statesman* to protest against the misuse of "fascist" as an indiscriminate term of disapproval. In Spain, meanwhile, half the foreign correspondents write dispatches about the other half, while on the *Criterion* front T. S. Eliot ruminates on the atrocities of the partisan press. Many of the actors in the drama take manifest pride in their artifice. Ralph Bates announces to his audience in the *Left Review*: "It is the legendary heroic quality of this struggle that I am trying to make clear, not its violence." Graham Greene restores some sense of reality by pointing out in his review of "the worst film of the decade" *Last Train for Madrid*, that "there is something a little shocking about these noble self-sacrifices and heroic deaths... In front of a back-projection of ruined Madrid itself, about the facelessness of the screen journalist in a screen air raid mingled with news-shots of the genuine terror".

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Caught in the war of words

Edward Mendelson

VALENTINE CUNNINGHAM (Editor)
Spanish Front: Writers on the Civil War
388pp. Oxford University Press. £15
(paperback, £4.95).
019 2122584JOHN CORNFORD
Collected Writings
Edited by Jonathan Galassi
203pp. Carcanet. £5.95.
085635 6522CHRISTOPHER CAUDWELL
Scenes and Actions: Unpublished manuscripts
Edited by Jean Duparc and David Margolies
241pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £19.95.
0710203748
Collected Poems 1924-1936
Edited and with an introduction by Alan
Young
180pp. Carcanet. £5.95.
085635 6303

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simply to report events". Pictorial warfare figures almost as largely in the anthology as its literary counterpart. For six weeks the *New Statesman* is the site of a major battle in the Picasso campaign. First Anthony Blunt launches an attack on Picasso's rarefied technique and his lack of revolutionary "optimism": he should have realized that the Civil War is "only the tragic part of a great forward movement". Interventionist forces are sent on both sides by Herbert Read, William Coldstream and Roland Penrose, but the campaign ends inconclusively, only to be reopened the next year over "Guernica". With most of the writers in Spain wearing the uniform of Hemingway's diction, Hemingway pre-empt the field by directing a documentary film. When he finally makes a cameo appearance in print, late in the book, he plays himself playing a filmmaker. "Afterwards when it is all over," he begins, "you have a picture." Shock troops of images burst across enemy lines, followed by lumbering battalions of words. Away from the battle, poets sit down to write about Spain and produce poems about war photographs.

Spanish Front is a book constructed upon the truth that writing can never respond directly to experience but must always imitate or contra-

illuminating, tendentious and sometimes exasperating. Its contents range from Virginia Woolf's private recollections of Julian Bell to inflammatory Republican outbursts in the pages of *Popular Flying*. The writers represented in the book are British, North American, French, Russian, and Dutch - but not one is Spanish. It is easier to think of Spain as a text if you don't have to live there. The introduction offers sharp observations on modern propaganda, but it sometimes forgets its critical sophistication and adopts the tone of a boys' adventure story. At one point Cunningham considers the ways in which writers "might fail to satisfy Spain's various texts".

Some writers' writing never recovered from the testing Spain gave it. Auden, for example, found it difficult to go on praising bombing planes and helmeted airmen after his Spanish experiences.

This assumes that a writer becomes a lesser artist when he outgrows the tough-guy poses of his youth.

Although Cunningham has pondered Orwell on the English language he can still write a sentence like this one: "Nationalist clerics were bumped off, to be sure, but peasants and soldiers were taught to read by the Repub-



Grenade-throwers of the Durruti column; reproduced from Images of the Spanish Civil War (192pp. Allen and Unwin. £14.95. 004 940089 4).

dict something already written, something already one step away from an inaccessible reality. This truth is now an academic truism, repeated endlessly in seminars and conferences by eager volunteers to the Intertextual Brigade. The slogans of their campaign recur in Cunningham's introduction. Spain, he writes, is an artefact of those who wrote it: "It is in their text, it is as text, that Spain exists, by and large, for most of us, the belated readers of their text-making labours". Spain itself "had instant effect on people's texts, not least because a clear and central part of its nature was textual". Writers at the time "perceived Spain as being dense with their own textualising". And today "Spain is still capable of sustaining new readings, it is still a reinterpretation, revisable set of texts." Every anthology of Spanish War writing takes a stand on Spanish politics, if only because the Republic's writers massively outnumbered Franco's and were far superior in training, equipment and morale. This is the first anthology of its kind that takes a stand on academic politics also. The same paragraph in the introduction that describes Spain as a re-interpretable set of texts also calls attention to the many women who wrote about the war but whose work was ignored until now. The alliance of textuality and feminism in Cunningham's paragraph has strictly political motives. The two movements have sharply different goals, but they share a mistrustful and uneasy alliance in a new United Front, one that opposes the reactionary forces in the English Faculty Civil War.

Cunningham's anthology is a resourceful, lic's teams of adult-educators and reading-matter was widely disseminated in the Republic's powerful drive for popular literacy." In the prose of an Oxford don the phrase *bumped off* signifies a context of pulp fiction and gangster movies where violence is balletic and unreal; while the passive construction blurs the fact that someone performed the deed that the verb has rendered innocuous. The phrase *to be sure* implies that all this is too familiar for any reasonable person to fret about. And the military phrase *powerful drive* takes the undeniable fact of the war itself and displaces it from battlefield to classroom, from guns to texts. Some years ago a senior member of the Textualist International referred in a lecture to "wars and other texts". One of his colleagues replied, "Yes, my father was killed in one of those texts." Cunningham can sympathize with both sides in this exchange. Outside his rare lapses into bumping off he is as alert to the force of arms as to the power of language, and this double awareness gives his anthology its unique excitement. If he inclines towards the textualist camp in *Spanish Front* he may be reacting against his own inclinations in his anthology, *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse* (reviewed in the TLS of August 1, 1980). His critical position in 1980 was almost the opposite of his position in 1986 (and he included in the 1980 volume an eloquent selection of Spanish poems in translations from the period). His 1980 introduction, a long and detailed literary history filled with information unobtainable elsewhere, expressed impatience with any "slick management of words that wil-

fully rebuffs any human connection with what is being described". Self-conscious texts were culpable liars in 1980. Auden's "Spain" was the worst offender of all. It was "evasive in a way that's quite characteristic", and guilty of "a deliberately inhuman standoffishness". In 1986 the same poem has been thoroughly rehabilitated. Now it offers "powerful suggestions about the malleability of Spain"; it "rings truer and truer" in its assertion that Spain is inevitably an object of diverse interpretations; and it provides many of the arguments and cadences of Cunningham's introduction.

Cunningham is right about Auden's "Spain" in 1986, but he was also right about it in 1980. For both better and worse, Auden's poem, unlike virtually every English poem about the Spanish war, keeps its distance from its subject and mistrusts its own purposes. It recognizes that it issues from something very like "the expending of powers / On the flat ephemeral pamphlet and the boring meeting". It sees Spain as Spain can be seen only through the formal mediation of a geological map, as "that arid square, that fragment ripped off from hot / Africa, soldered so crudely to inventive Europe / . . . that tableland scored by rivers". It is also a poem torn by internal contradictions. It deploys a myth of inevitable progress while affirming human freedom to err and fail. It uses metaphors of unconscious organic necessity in praising the conscious choices of the international volunteers. When Auden renounced the poem as dishonest he was rejecting its indifferent openness to exactly contradictory readings. This openness permits the poem to be reduced to the status of mere text, and it encourages the critical fantasy that all writings are mere texts, mere objects of interpretation, malleable and passive, with nothing to say that might be worth knowing.

Yet the "inhuman standoffishness" of Auden's poem was its most prophetic element. It was the means by which Auden came closest to solving a problem that baffled everyone who wrote about the war. Within a few months of Franco's invasion it became clear that poetic myths of personal heroism and endurance no longer served in an age of mechanized and anonymous warfare. The Nationalists' aerial bombardments and the sectarian purges in the United Front gave the lie to the lyric personal voice, but that was the only voice that was of the war poets knew how to use. In "Spain" Auden refused the lyric voice, and portrayed the lyric poet lost in Romantic isolation - "star-tled among the pines, / Or where the loose waterfall sings compact [the word echoes Thebes' equation of the lunatic, the lover, and the poet], or upright / On the crag by the leaning tower". Most of the writing that endures from the Spanish war - notably "Spain" and *Homage to Catalonia* - issued from a search for a more truthful alternative to the lyric or heroic voice. All the debates over style that Cunningham revives in *Spanish Front* reflect the strains and exigency of the search. Everyone knew that everyone else's solution was wrong (and much energy was devoted to refutations of Orwell's solution), but few wrote with any real confidence that their own solutions were right. Many literary debates in the Spanish war took the place of political debates that seemed too dangerous or inexpedient to conduct in public.

The writer who makes the most appearances in each of Cunningham's anthologies is Spender. The crisis of the Civil War provoked him to a long debate with himself on political and literary questions, a debate he conducted in poems, essays, reviews, drama, journalism, public speeches, and private letters. Cunningham wrote in 1980: "I want others to be impressed, as I have been in discovering it, by Spender's great bulk of serious and sensitive, often anguished, always would-be-honest, writing of this period." Spender's prominence in both the 1980 and 1986 collections is a tribute to his willingness to educate himself in public, a practice that continues to earn the jeers of those who never felt the need to educate themselves at all.

Some of the most bitter jeering came from a Cambridge undergraduate named John Cornford, during a brief period before he gave up literature for action and volunteered in the war against Franco. Cornford died in battle at twenty-one, and Spender wrote a memorial tribute (reprinted by Cunningham) of lapidary dignity and weight. Cornford's family pack-

The Spanish Civil War

ground in an intellectual aristocracy, his energy and fluency as a political rebel at school and Cambridge, his personal glamour and literary skill—all these, combined with his early death, assured him an immediate posthumous status as a figure of heroic myth. The biographical account in Peter Stansky and William Abrahams's *Journey to the Frontier* (1966) renewed and elaborated the myth for a younger generation. In 1976 Jonathan Galassi collected Cornford's poems, essays, and letters under the title *Understand the Weapon. Understand the Wound*. This book is now back in print, slightly revised, as Cornford's *Collected Writings*. Galassi's introduction makes some shrewd demurrers to the myth, but so tactfully that only a sceptical and attentive reader is likely to notice. Although Galassi corrects some of the idealizing in the Stansky and Abrahams book, he celebrates Cornford (as they do not) as "the first Englishman to enlist against Franco". Priority is meaningless outside the realm of myth, so it scarcely matters that the first volunteers (as Cunningham noted in 1980) were in fact two East End tailors named Sam Masters and Nat Cohen. No one has ever thought of transfiguring them into myths.

"A young tough" is Cunningham's unmythical description of Cornford, and it exactly corresponds to the self-portrait presented by his collected writings. In the first of his published letters he struts before his mother: I have just come from a really superb argument with the school chaplain in which I defended him rather heavily. The unfortunate man has to take us in "divinity" every week, in which we read a hopelessly incompetent book about the Christian religion, on which I and one or two others . . . attack him furiously. The good man is fairly intelligent but extremely slow, and it always ends by our forcing him to the most extravagant statements, or else losing his temper. It is good fun, if rather brutal.

Cornford soon became a committed Communist. Later, in Spain, he found himself in the same position as the unfortunate chaplain but evidently learned nothing from the reversal of roles. He had met some disaffected German Communists:

Four of them are ex-members of the party: one still a member. They have left because they genuinely believe the [Communist] International has deserted the revolution . . . I do not know enough of the Spanish position (ie, the party line on Spain) to argue with them successfully. But I am beginning to find out how much the Party and the International have become flesh and blood to me. Even when I can put forward no rational argument, I feel that to cut adrift of the Party is the beginning of political suicide.

The end of isolation

Sandra Ott

RUTH BEHAR
Santa María del Monte: The presence of the past in a Spanish village
 407pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press.
 £20.
 0691 094195

In *Santa María del Monte* Ruth Behar seeks to understand how past and present are woven together in the life and thought of a people living in the foothills of the Cantabrian mountains in north-western Spain. Unlike so many anthropological accounts of rural life in Spain, which focus on contemporary social and economic change, this book concentrates on long-term cultural continuity. The topics on which Ms Behar focuses are inheritance, the *cortejo* or village council, and patterns of access to and management of private and communal resources; and this main text is supported by a range of supplementary information on weights, measures and monetary units, and the like. "The life histories of two informants are also included. All in all, this is a welcome step forward in Iberian anthropology."

Located in the province of León, Santa María is a village of some 120 inhabitants, many of whom take a keen interest in "the presence of the past" in their small society and who represent an old rural way of life which has almost disappeared. The village is a long history of social and physical isolation which has only finally col-

lapsed very recently. Perhaps the most visible mark of this is the development nearby of an estate of holiday chalets for people from the cities, but it is also marked by the move from a more or less self-sufficient subsistence economy to one in which the cash nexus has become all-important. As a village woman remarked, "today they buy their chickens from the truck vendors and sell the ones they raise themselves in León."

However, one wonders just how far the villagers are not inventing some golden past of self-sufficiency. In an interesting chapter on inheritance, Behar shows how money was formerly used to achieve an equivalence of hereditaments in a society where great emphasis is placed on all heirs receiving equally. Everything not readily divisible, and some things that are, were valued in monetary terms to ensure that each party, although inheriting different things, would end up with an equal share. For example, a house that is to be divided among a number of people may be valued by assessing the wooden frame (at so many pesetas a foot). One can accept Behar's claim that monetary values are being used here as a measure of equivalence, to achieve a balance between disparate objects rather than as an assessment of their financial worth. On the other hand, she plays down the importance of cash, overlooking the evidence available in one of the two life histories she reproduces.

Without detracting from the excellence of her work, Dr Behar may have fallen between two stools. I have my doubts that a historian will be satisfied with this as a historical work, and an anthropologist may find too much hinted at but left undescribed.

work of Marxist criticism in English. He was the first English Marxist to attribute to art an initiating rather than a subordinate role in the social revolution. As Shelley praised the imagination as the instrument of moral good, so Caudwell praised fantasy as a means of bringing forth hopes that revolution might then fulfill. Although his historical optimism was necessarily vague, it was at least generous, especially when contrasted with the thuggish swagger that poses as revolutionary hope in writers like Cornford.

Scenes and Actions (a volume endowed by the printer or the binder with a fetid odour unique in modern bookmaking) gathers excerpts from the early drafts that led to *Illusion and Reality*, together with selections from Caudwell's letters and unpublished fiction. Much of this embarrasses even his editors. With the enthusiasm of a gifted autodidact the young (not yet Marxist) Caudwell wrote and abandoned breathless imitations of Gulliver and Zaratustra. His later and more realistic stories combine sharp psychological observation with blunt political purpose. His Marxist study of evolution and heredity has a synthetic

All types of men

Antony Beevor

F.M. ORTAS
The Last Pharaoh
 Translated by Alex Martinez
 239pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £9.95.
 0297789074
 MICHEL DEL CASTILLO
The Dishonoured
 Translated by Humphrey Hare
 274pp. Serpent's Tail. £4.95.
 085242 1029

Fortunately, the Spanish Civil War is seldom referred to any more by that misleading tag, "the poets' war". In the realm of fiction, it was remarkable for the mediocrity of the novels it inspired. The self-conscious style of middle-class intellectuals attempting gritty proletarian prose was, more often than not, excruciating. Here, however, we have two novels which could hardly be more different from those written by foreign sympathizers: a new one by a veteran of the labour camps and another written in the 1950s by a child of the Republican diaspora.

Soon after the Nationalist victory General Franco ordered work to begin on a vast memorial. Republican prisoners of war formed into labour battalions were to hack a cathedral out of a granite rockface near El Escorial. The Valley of the Fallen was designed to be the spectacular mausoleum of "New Spain", housing the bodies both of the Falangist leader José Antonio and of the Caudillo himself. The offensive vulgarity of its architecture and sculpture has to be seen to be appreciated.

The building of such a grotesque monument by slave labour is a subject which deserves a great book. Sadly, *The Last Pharaoh* is not it. In fact, it is embarrassingly bad. The publisher's blurb should perhaps serve as an unintended warning: "It is a magnificent novel and should be read by everyone who cares about the future of humanity." In his bizarre introduction, F. M. Ortas seeks to link the Republican slaves with the Children of Israel building the pyramids (a theme hard to spot in the novel) and then sets forth his own theories. Confidence is not inspired by the sweeping statements and clumsy exaggerations, nor by a "brief history" in which there are eight errors of fact (in fifteen lines) about the events leading up to the Spanish Civil War.

The novel begins with the arrival of the prisoners and their guards below the rockface. The main prisoner-hero is a burly Basque; his opponent, Sergeant Carrizo Botines, a self-important sadist. Other characters include an effete, aristocratic lieutenant, who selects a captive from among the prisoners; a captain who is a close liberal; a military padre, who undergoes a dramatic conversion from pious bigot to worker priest; a corporal who runs the black market; and a young middle-class prisoner, a forerunner of student unrest. These characters and their situation are

vigour that compensates for its dizzily vague language, and his argument that scientists cover in nature the same kind of laws the acknowledge in society retains its force. Its editors make strong claims for Caudwell's theoretical originality, but while they admire his intellectual independence they also seem mildly alarmed by it. "It is now confirmed," they reassure us, that Caudwell "did not violate party discipline."

Caudwell's poetry, mostly unpublished and now, was written in an anonymous period style that reads like a generalized average of English poetry from the late 1920s and early 30s. Its satires are angry but not violent. His lyrics are warm but not passionate. His epigrams are pointed but not dangerous. He wrote his best verse for the choruses in his modernist version of *Orestes*, an effective imitation of the Auden-Isherwood extravaganzas. Also Young's judicious introduction to the *Collected Poems* lightens some of the obscurities, a deliberately obscure career. The Spain he has emerged today, with all its contradictions and compromises, is one that Caudwell would find worthy of the struggle yesterday.

evidently meant to represent Franquist society. Perhaps the author intended to let his remain ciphers in order to symbolize the degradation and dehumanization caused by the régime. But they mouth clichés and political platitudes at each other, gazes are automatically "hawk-like" or "unflinching", and we begin to suspect a deficiency in the writing. It must also be said that either the translation or the editing is very unsound in places.)

The basic trouble, however, seems not so much a lack of skill—which could have been surmounted had the characters been more convincing—but that the author seems unsure of what he wants to write. Is his book black caricature, a vehicle for political polemic, or a "human story"? Whichever, the result is an unfortunate jumble.

Michel Del Castillo's second novel *Le Cœur d'affiches*, originally published in France in 1958 and in an unobjectionable English translation the following year, is now reissued under its American title *The Dishonoured*. Although set in Madrid during the period leading up to the Civil War and the first six months of fighting, the author makes little attempt at historical accuracy. This proves no disadvantage, for the novel owes more to political and theological argument, and it turns out to be powerful and unexpectedly gripping.

At first one cannot help suspecting that *The Dishonoured* is the work of a young writer who has just discovered Freud. Three youths—Olny, a child of nature from the shanty-town known as the Zone, Ramirez, a severe Communist of petit bourgeois origins, and Santiago, an idealistic young aristocrat—look as though they are supposed to represent the id, ego and superego of humanity. But Castillo manages to avoid weighing down his story with top-heavy symbolism.

Olny, trapped by fate in the Zone, is taken by Ramirez to a Communist meeting. There his life seems to be changed by Santiago's moving speech. Ramirez despises the lumpen-proletarian Olny, who is shocked when he says that idealists like Santiago will have to be liquidated after the Revolution. Santiago rescues Olny and his young wife from the Zone by providing work and a small flat. In gratitude Olny spends his nights bill-sticking for the Party, unaware that Santiago has begun to suffer a crisis of faith.

Faced with the Nationalist army's attack on Madrid and the activities of the Falangist fifth column within, the Communists' ruthlessness, particularly in pursuit of sectarian power, convinces Santiago that "no ideal could bear the stain of blood". The novel's construction is both simple and clever in the way it emphasizes Castillo's theme of inescapable fate. The implicit conclusion is that religious quietism must, virtually by definition, be preferable to the grotesque distortions that result from idealistic activism. It is, without doubt, a much better book than Ramón Sender's overrated *Seven Red Sundays*. *The Last Pharaoh* simply does not stand comparison.

The real made sense

A. S. Byatt

NICHOLAS BOYLE and MARTIN SWALES
 (Editors)
Realism in European Literature: Essays in honour of J. P. Stern
 206pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.
 0521254876
 BARBARA FOLEY
Telling the Truth: The theory and practice of documentary fiction
 273pp. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
 £24.95.
 08014 1877 1

The Saint-Simonians distinguished between Ages of Faith and Ages of Criticism. In literary matters at least ours is an Age of Criticism; much ferocious intellectual energy that might once have gone into works of art has gone into questioning the nature, the authority, of earlier art. Much of the art we have is a form of criticism, and our sharpest aesthetic responses are often to a paradox of a major critic rather than to a story or a poem. And this criticism extends beyond the confines of schools and texts: polemic for and against literary "realism" is an expression of anxiety, or dogmatism, about reality. It is strenuously involved with philosophy and politics. In 1973 J. P. Stern published *On Realism*, a meditation which was itself a work of art, carefully constructed in brief paragraphs, deliberately avoiding any definition of its terms, using the word in its moral and common meanings as well as in its aesthetic and historical sense. It was a wise book, precise and liberating. *Realism in European Literature* is a collection of essays in honour of Stern, written by "critics, theorists, historians and a philosopher".

Most of these essayists would be concerned to uphold what Lenin called "the fundamental tenet of materialism"—"the independence of the external world from the mind". This definition comes from Barbara Foley's *Telling the Truth*, which approaches the problem of the reality described by fiction from a point of view very different from the essayists' (with the exception of Stephen Heath). Professor Foley is a Marxist who has worked on Dos Passos and has attempted to construct a theory of documentary fiction which will both distinguish between truth and fiction and describe their relationship. What her book has in common with Stern's and with the essayists is a wish to evade what Stern calls solipsism and Foley calls, *inter alia*, textual fetishism. Both are wary of Barthes: Stern questions his "Manichaean" belief that "realism" can only be knowledge of the "unreal reality of language"; Foley says, "For Barthes the insistence upon a referent beyond textuality is not simply a gesture of epistemological naïveté: it is an act of political repression." She herself is centrally concerned to re-establish this referent, this real world, against the views of such as Ronald Sukenick: "Reality doesn't exist, time doesn't exist, personality doesn't exist . . . In view of these annihilations it will be no surprise that literature also doesn't exist—how could it?"

One way of re-establishing our sense of the meaningful relationships between words and things is to treat fiction as a mode of cognition: Foley sees a fiction as an "analogous configuration", and mimesis as a contract between reader and writer which can vary in its nature with the kind or amount of real "truths" implicated in a fiction—she is interested in the nature of the imaginative and cognitive support given to fictive "truths" by fake or genuine historical documents, and references to real people or things. The philosopher among the essayists, Renford Bambrough, writes on Henry James as a kind of pragmatic philosopher, making hypotheses about probable human behaviour as stringent in their way as scientific ones but avoiding the schematism of ideas and beliefs and theories. "Particulars," he says, "are not tyrannical. They are authoritative. Like Bishop Butler's conscience, if they had power, as they have, manifest authority, they would absolutely govern the world of thought." Bambrough and Foley all call on Wittgenstein's belief that realism can be described by his theory of "family resemblances". There is no essence of realism: "realistic writings form a family, the members of which have family likenesses". Philosophy, and the novel, Bambrough says, in

Wittgenstein's world, should renounce all attempts at explanation and allow description to take its place. Foley picks her way, stringently and sensibly, through a welter of theories of description, analysing ideas about "assertion" about the subject (both reader, writer and narrator) and the referent. Like other recent writers on mimesis she finds the *Gestalt* psychologists' procedures useful; we read the world through cognitive "sets" but this does not mean we have no knowledge of reality.

Stephen Heath, whose essay is entitled "Realism, modernism and language-consciousness", is working in a related area. He is concerned to answer Stern's doubts about the "language-conscious novel", to argue that there is a modernist version of realism, but also to reassert that realism is a *product* of a "politics of reality" constructed by subjects in history. "To say which is not to detach it from any connection with an external reality." Realism is not easy, particulars are hard to grasp: Heath is good on Balzac, whose vision of the world, alleged to be simple and unitary, has been castigated by critics claiming that realism represented bad faith, a universe of death. Not so, Heath says; Balzac himself said that the world was not "a simple block, but a mosaic", contemporary reality, unlike history, "a very shifting model, hard to keep in place". Heath does not differ from the other writers in claiming "Realism is reality as intelligibility, the real made sense: it is there to provide knowledge and truth." But he goes on to quote Marx on the science to which nineteenth-century realism was often compared, which "would be superfluous if the outward appearance and essence of things directly coincided".

Heath directly disputes Stern's claim that realism is a "perennial mode", that its attitudes represent something abiding, morally and spiritually necessary to our life in the world and in our own communities. Professor Foley deploys her theory of fiction in a historical study covering eighteenth-century "false documents", nineteenth-century historical novels, modernist documentary novels and Afro-American documentary novels. She connects the realities mediated by these narrative modes to the political and economic conditions of their times, with considerable success as well as some strain and simplification. She is thus able to argue that the Afro-American writer or narrator needs to adduce much more factual "evidence" because, not being "typical" of the dominant ideology, the black becomes simultaneously less defined and more necessarily a type of his own rejected or unaccepted culture.

The essayists, apart from Heath, who is ambivalent, generally accept Stern's vision of the "perennial" mode, but their work covers a wide historical range. Wolfgang Iser discusses significant objects in the symbolic literature of the Middle Ages, looking for Stern's specificity and solidity in these meaningful birds and stones. Anne Barton, in a brilliant essay entitled "Enter mariners, we!", discusses the lovely paradox of the increasingly realistic stage effects in Shakespeare's increasingly poetic and symbolic late plays. (She makes the point that he uses the word "real" only three times and "unreal" twice, choosing "true" and "false" for moral judgment and metaphysical priorities.) Graham Hough writes on the language of *Bleak House*, showing how Dickens's use of his two narrators makes the contemplation of language and vocabulary an intrinsic part of a nineteenth-century realism that is by no means slippery-smooth or translucent. Sheila Stern writes on Proust's Balzac, again tracing a kind of language-consciousness, an authorial figuration from the earlier writer to the later, showing how Proust makes his own reality, of which Balzac's authority and composition are parts. Martin Swales examines nineteenth-century German realism, which displays a comparative lack of the richness of facts, objects, social relations, quiddities, respect for which Stern values; nevertheless, he claims, the kind of abstractions and literary symbols mediated by these novelists are themselves a proper object of realistic study. "The literary symbol is particularly attuned to tracing the psychological anchorage of social life", he claims, having elegantly illustrated this point from Gottfried Keller. The literary symbol is part of the reality we may describe, but need not irritably seek to define, within the terms of Stern's project. Yet it is at the edge of

something we feel to be threatening.

We might call this abstraction. Foley is clear that abstraction in its Marxist sense is essential to the constitution of the reality she is interested in. "Despite its characteristic projection of a dense specificity," she writes, "the mimetic text produces cognition through generalization . . . Paradoxically illusion rests in the peculiar concreteness of detail; 'reality' is conveyed by relationality." Here she is in direct opposition to the weight of Stern's observations and proceedings, though her conclusion is coherent and honourable. Stern quotes, disapprovingly, Brecht's ideological conclusion that Shelley in *The Mask of Anarchy* is a "better realist than Balzac" because "Shelley makes abstraction easier for the reader." "By abstraction", Stern says, "Brecht means that distancing from the actualities of a given society which he like Marx regarded as prerequisites of the revolutionary consciousness and action."

I don't think it's stretching the term too far to relate this ideological abstraction to the dangers Nicholas Boyle's essay finds in Nietzsche's characteristic riddling language, slipping always between the specific and the typical, fact and metaphor, description and ideology. From typology to solipsism is a short step in this circle

From the régime of reading

Michael Sprinker

JOHN FROW
Marxism and Literary History
 272pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £19.50.
 0631 148639

This is an ambitious and provocative book. John Frow has undertaken the formidable task of synthesizing a wide variety of contemporary critical practices by assessing their contribution to the traditional problem of producing literary history. While it is difficult to pin down the exact method or approach that Frow advocates—indeed, to do so would run counter to the drift of his argument, which maintains that all discourses are overdetermined by a range of heterogeneous forces and conditions resistant to reduction to a single project or goal—I will risk the tag "Foucauldian" to describe the project of *Marxism and Literary History*. Both the strength and the limits of Frow's book are defined by the trajectory of Foucault's conception of history.

Foucault is directly invoked on a number of occasions, notably in Chapter Three, "Discourse and Power", where the relationship between language and ideology is elaborated. The book's final chapter, "Limits: The politics of reading", opens with an account of Foucault's debate with Derrida, and while it hedges a bit, its basic sympathies clearly lie with Foucault's criticism of Derrida's "petit pédagogue". Throughout, Frow insists that texts are determined by discursive practices which are not necessarily immanent within the text itself. What he calls the "regime of reading", by means of which a text is interpreted, will situate it within certain ideological horizons that may be entirely alien to the intention of the author who wrote the words in the first place. Thus, Frow can entertain a certain limited sympathy for the conventionalism of Stanley Fish, while correctly observing that Fish has never offered a convincing account of how his infamous "interpretive communities" come to be constituted just because he lacks any concept of the material force of ideology.

Frow is at his best in showing the limits of other critical practices. His introductory chapter mounts a pointed critique of Lukács and the bases of conventional Marxist historicism. Siding more or less with Brecht (and, in a different way, with Paul de Man), he convincingly shows how Lukács's positing of progressive aesthetic forms is grounded in certain utopian ethical categories, and how the teleological and totalizing conception of history evident in *History and Class Consciousness* established the boundaries of his later aesthetic judgments. The book also contains, *inter alia*, interesting assessments of Fredric Jameson, Terry Eagleton, Michael Riffaterre, Hans Robert Jauss, Russian Formalism and the Prague school. In general, Frow is patient and just in his exposi-

tion of competing theories, while remaining alive to the limits each reveals in relation to problems of literary history and interpretation. What of Frow's own project? What limits does it reveal? The final pages of *Marxism and Literary History* call for the "construction of a general poetics" that would "at once complete and exceed the argument of this book". But what can he mean here by the term "poetics"? The subject-matter of poetics is precisely not historical. Rather, as de Man observed, it "pertains to the formal analysis of linguistic entities" and "deals with theoretical models prior to their historical realization". Poetics is a science, not an art, but on Frow's account, there can be no such thing as formally invariant textual structures upon which such a science could be based.

This tension between poetics as a science and the historical activity of interpretation is evident throughout the book. One striking instance occurs when Frow discusses several translations of a passage from the *Iliad*. His claim that "translation becomes an active recuperation of social content" is surely correct and is amply illustrated in the distinct ideological horizons of the translations he cites. But this begs the central question: how is it possible to read and understand the social content itself, which, on Frow's account, is as much a text (and therefore as indeterminate in its nature) as the particular historical instances of different translations of Homer? If it is the case that the literary system (not individual readers) produces meaning, and that this system is a "normative regime, a semantic code which governs the nature and the limits of literariness and the relations of signification which are socially possible and legitimate for the genres it recognizes", then the object of investigation for poetics has been shifted from individual texts to the structure of the system itself (the historical horizon of expectation) without, for all that, evading the epistemological problem of how to produce knowledge of the thing being investigated. Specifying the code of a given literary system may be more difficult than finding the semantic and syntactic keys to a single text, but it is not methodologically different in kind.

The problem that *Marxism and Literary History* approaches without solving is that of the concept of history itself. On a Foucauldian view, there can be no invariant structures of historicity. All that we have are specific historical events whose causality is individual and not subject to general theoretical protocols. This model of historical investigation comes close to reproducing the effects of Rankean positivism. One would have thought that Marxism could not be accommodated in such a historical model. Foucault was certainly under no illusion in this matter and frankly rejected Marxist historical science in his later work. It may be, then, that the conjunction in John Frow's title remains more problematic than he recognizes.

John Frow is a Marxist

Special enthusiasms

John Richetti

MARY ANNE SCHOFIELD and CECILIA MACHESKI (Editors)
Fetter'd or Free?: British women novelists, 1670-1815
441pp. Ohio University Press. £38.50.
0821407996

Some of the contributors to this book of essays attempt to answer its titular question by excavating a female subculture from the ruins of the eighteenth-century popular novel, finding in its sentimental and lurid formulas what the editors call "freely invented symbolic matrices . . . that define the female self when the male structures no longer sufficed" and turning that figure of fun, the lady novelist, into an avenging angel, powerfully but covertly protesting the wrongs of woman.

Such a claim, however, can emerge only slowly; there is a good deal of archaeological drudgery to be done before these subtexts can appear. Even the boldest of the essays in this book is necessarily concerned with the modest task of filling out literary history, of recounting the lives and works of forgotten and unread woman novelists such as Eliza Haywood, Mary Manley, Jane Barker, Mary Brunton and Frances Sheridan, and of refurbishing the diminished reputations of writers like Charlotte Lennox, Charlotte Smith and Sarah Fielding.

A few essays are content to provide useful new information, such as Robert Adams Day's discussion of Aphra Behn's interesting anticipation of biblical higher criticism, or Susan Staves's scholarly reconstruction of the real-life basis of Ann Masterman Skinn's iconoclastic *The Old Maid*; or *The History of Miss Ravensworth* (1771) in her elopement and di-

voice. At their most ambitious, many of these critics seek to widen the canon and extend the current feminist revision of English literary history by finding eighteenth-century admirations of the Brontës and George Eliot. In her bid to rescue Frances Sheridan (mother of Richard Brinsley) "from oblivion", Margaret Doody makes an interesting case for the moral complexity and proto-Protestant sense of time in the *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Biddulph* (1761) and its sequel in 1767. But the essay exemplifies Doody's talents as a critic without effectively resuscitating Sheridan's novel, and her brave summary of its unremitting disasters is as much as any reader will probably need.

Literary historians, necessarily patient and curious, may want to read Frances Sheridan and some of the other novelists exhumed here, but most readers will not be tempted. With the notable exceptions of Jane Austen and Maria Edgeworth, the novelists presented require the special perspective and enthusiasm of feminist criticism to come alive. In fact, what most of the contributors extract from these novels are not the glimmerings of artistic control Doody finds in Sheridan. Such books live, mainly, as newly deciphered signs, evidence for what Cecilia Macheski in her essay on images of needlework in eighteenth-century literature calls shared "patterns of imagery and ideas based on their common experience" as women. The novels themselves are often for these critics entirely subordinate to what they can tell the sympathetic historian about the female experience that produced them. In her "salubrious sluts and pretty prostitutes", according to Mary Anne Schofield, Eliza Haywood sought to "destroy the myth of aggressive, male victimizer and submissive, acquiescent, female victim" - and so on.

Such interpretations assume rather naively that women's experience survives in fiction somehow undistorted by dominating cultural

forms, and that the sentimental novel is a perfect medium for what is authentically female.

With a larger cultural context, however, such decoding of popular fiction can be rewarding. Jerry C. Beasley, for example, makes a good case for the political resonances of early eighteenth-century female formula fiction as it represents an ideal of domestic order "against a reality made dangerous by the anarchic forces of power-mongering, lasciviousness, and corruption". But in making a similar point about Charlotte Smith's *Demond* (1792), Diana Bowstead contends that it is simultaneously sentimental and "realistic, radical, and incisive". From what she shows of this novel, that is hardly a convincing assertion.

The best essays avoid special pleading by balancing the artistic limitations of most sen-

Great explanations

Philip Collins

MICHAEL COTSELL
The Companion to "Our Mutual Friend"
316pp. Allen and Unwin. £27.50.
0048000353
WENDY S. JACOBSON
The Companion to "The Mystery of Edwin Drood"
209pp. Allen and Unwin. £22.50.
0048000639

These are the first two of the nineteen-volume Dickens Companions series. A volume will be devoted to every novel, other volumes will cover the major non-fictional prose and Christmas books, and the series will conclude with a General Index. It is dedicated to the memory of T. J. B. Spencer who, as Director of the Shakespeare Institute, decided to diversify from Elizabethan-Jacobean post-graduate studies, and began setting doctorate candidates to annotating Dickens. He died before the project got far, but two of its graduates, Susan Shatto and Michael Cotsell, have assembled a team to complete it. The series will, clearly, be invaluable: and as its General Editors remark, the final Index volume will provide an excellent *vide-mecum* for all students of the period, besides Dickens specialists.

Dickens, like almost all novelists, has been grossly under-annotated in comparison with what we take for granted as adequate levels of annotation for, say, Shakespeare or Milton; and he, more than most Victorian novelists, needs extensive annotation because he takes in so much more of the field. Many contemporaries, indeed, foretold that he would soon become incomprehensible because he alluded so profusely to the manners, concerns, controversies, events, paraphernalia, institutions, personalities and topicalities of his age; besides referring in remarkable detail to the topography of a rapidly changing London. Though not a specially learned or intellectual man, Dickens makes many literary allusions too - often to Shakespeare, the Bible, the Prayer Book, and *The Arabian Nights*, but also to other standard classics, plays, popular songs, fairy-tales, documentary volumes and much else. These two new books show him alluding also, and less predictably, to Aristotle's *Poetics*, Horace's *Art Poetica*, Dryden's *Aeneid*, and the nebular hypothesis; and to his narratives' being influenced by the French play which Irving was to make famous in England as *The Bells*, by the *Life of Grimaldi* he edited and by *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*.

Michael Cotsell and Wendy Jacobson have done their work well: rarely does one look for an explanation and not find one; rarely do they err. Annotating *Our Mutual Friend*, a novel much fuller of social stuff than *Edwin Drood*, Cotsell offers extensive and fascinating information on such matters as watermen, educational institutions, the Poor Law, the dust industry and lazarettos. *Our Mutual Friend* has yet to be textually edited, so Cotsell's annotation of many unpublished passages is of great value and especially valuable. It was doubly disconcerting to find a number of errors in his transcripts of Dickens's "Number plans" and both he and Jacobson have the irritating habit of sometimes trans-

cribing autograph capital letters as lower-case. Often indeed they are indistinguishable in size, but Dickens was not so illiterate as to begin sentences or proper names in lower case. One other minor grumble: maybe as Shakespeare Institute graduates, both authors are over-keen to find Shakespearean allusions. "A too smiling large man" is alleged to echo Hamlet's "too too solid flesh", and John Jasper "Who did it?" to echo Macbeth's "Which of you have done this?" and so on - which I find as unconvincing as Johnson found an earlier Shakespearean editor's contention that his "Go before, I'll follow" must be a translation of "I prae, seque".

Such detail-packed volumes invite queries and criticisms: why not more on this and less on that? Why no note on Bradley Headstone's "hair-guard" (*things* are not this series' strongest point, so far)? Why assert a very dubious reference to J. S. Mill in *Drood*, Chapter Twenty-Two, but miss a likely one ("little moral Mill") in Chapter Seventeen? Should not the introduction to the *Drood* Companion have made clear that all the biographical information is unanimous (that Edwin has been murdered)? Any Dickens scholar could quibble here, long and enjoyably, but few would wish to attempt this formidable task or perform it more efficiently than has here been done - and there are maps and illustrations too, and notably full indexes (by Kevin Harris). A manifestly useful and well-planned series has made a good start.

Volume Five of Robert Lee Wolff's *Nineteenth-Century Fiction: A bibliographical catalogue in five volumes* (229pp. New York: Garland. \$100. 0 8240 9337 2) concludes the serially published record of the collection he put together. Principally the index volume, it also contains sections of relatively minor interest on anonymous novels (that is, those few works whose authors are untraceable), pseudonymous novels (works whose authors' disguises have proved impenetrable), multiply authored works and fiction-carrying periodicals (not an area of primary interest to Wolff, as a collector). A postscript by Katherine Frost Bruner and Mary Andrews Wolff recalls the circumstances in which Wolff planned the catalogue.

The aim of the editors, as they make clear, has been to get the work into print (Wolff having died in 1980), even though they have been unable personally to complete or check his bibliographical annotations. In itself a laudable aim, it has led to occasional inaccuracies which should not be laid at Wolff's door. In this volume, for instance, "Stirling Coyne" is entered as a pseudonymous author, when he is clearly Joseph Stirling Coyne (1803-68), the Irish dramatist whose career is fully chronicled in the *DNB*. Such lapses (although they may irritate anyone who pays \$500 of his own money for the set) are insignificant beside the overall utility of the catalogue. It offers a uniquely extensive anatomy of the Victorian novel, in all its protean variety. For the scholar, the librarian and the antiquarian bookseller, Wolff's *Catalogue* is already an indispensable tool. And it is unlikely that, until the far-off computerization of the British Library's nineteenth-century holdings, it will be superseded.

John Sutherland

Dogberry no more

Keith Wrightson

JOAN R. KENT
The English Village Constable 1580-1642:
A social and administrative study
325pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £27.50.
0198229135

A generation ago the village constables of Tudor and Stuart England were deemed scarcely worthy of historical notice. When they appeared in the pages of history they were portrayed largely in terms of the risible stereotypes of literature: real life Dogberrys, Dulls and Elbows; low-born, ignorant, incompetent and introduced primarily for the sake of comic relief. More recently, the growth of interest in the history of crime and in the structures and dynamics of village society has resulted in a somewhat better press for the constables. Their essential role in the machinery of law enforcement has been recognized, and if their failings have continued to attract attention, historians have dealt more sympathetically with the difficulties of their position as mediators between the demands of the law and the village communities in which they exercised their brief authority.

Joan R. Kent has already contributed much

to this revised view and with this substantial book she completes the task. It is, as her subtitle indicates, both a social and an administrative study and she provides much that is novel on both counts. By means of an exhaustive survey of the personnel of the constabulary in nine townships drawn from five counties, she reveals that if the social profile of constables varied in accordance with the socio-economic structures of particular settlements, they were usually men of some substance and commonly leading members of their communities. They were rarely reluctant to serve, despite the burdens of the office, and frequently had extensive experience of local government. In a thickly documented examination of their duties, she demonstrates that their powers and responsibilities grew significantly under the Tudors and early Stuarts and argues that by virtue of their roles not only in law enforcement but also in local administration, taxation and military affairs, the constables deserve recognition as the most important of local officers at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Moreover, they were often both industrious and effective in the performance of their offices and were as likely to be called on for the willing co-operation of their neighbours as to suffer their displeasure. Farewell the village constables of literary and historical myth.

End of the old honour

C. S. L. Davies

MERVYN JAMES
Society, Politics and Culture: Studies in early modern England
485pp. Cambridge University Press. £40.
0521257182
BARBARA J. HARRIS
Edward Stafford, Third Duke of Buckingham, 1478-1521
334pp. Stanford University Press. \$37.50.
0804713162

Mervyn James has written some of the most sensitive interpretations of Tudor history to appear in the past twenty years, though they have been slow to come to the attention even of specialists. His medium has been the long essay. Even his book *Family, Lineage and Civil Society*, on "society, politics, and mentality in the Durham Region", seems to have grown out of an introductory survey prepared for a British Association meeting at Durham. Publication of these essays now in a handsome volume is thus extremely welcome, the more so because they include a new piece on the Earl of Essex's revolt of 1601, and a retrospective consideration of his own work by the author.

James's interests have centred on the nobility in the Tudor North. That might suggest a

vision of the historian in boots and rucksack, striding the Pennine Way, in the mould of W. G. Hoskins or M. W. Beresford; or else a minute study of estate finances. James has done his stint in the archives, but his essays explore relationships rather than the technicalities of tenure or the morphology of villages. They emerge, evidently after long brooding from a mind steeped in a wide historical and literary culture, and informed by social and political theory. Without jargon or overt discussion of methodology, they explore the significance in terms of political action and social structure of attitudes, often expressed in symbolic form.

The theme is announced in the first article (In order of composition), in which the funeral ceremonies of Lord Dacre in 1563 and of Lord Wharton in 1568 are used to delineate the "picture of two contrasting societies". Dacre's world had its roots far in the past, "its points of contact with the world of the comitatus, the war-band mourning its dead chieftain". Wharton owed his peerage to Henry VIII and founded a family "whose fortunes would culminate in the career of a Whig marquess and party manager of the reign of Queen Anne". James is convinced, in the face of the dominant trend among historians today, that there was a qualitative change in the Tudor governing class. It was not just a question of "new men" replacing "old families", which had been going

on in a steady way through the centuries; but the supersession of a code of conduct predicated on "honour" and "personal faithfulness" by a new cultural synthesis, in which honour takes its place with religion, humanism and law, in an ethic of political obedience. This in turn was to give way in the Stuart period to "attitudes which could once more impart to political conflict the edge of intransigence"; "either those of Puritan millenarianism, or of an honour cut loose from its moorings in religion and wisdom".

These themes have been worked out slowly. The earlier essays are particular studies. The decline of the power of the Percy Earls of Northumberland is explored through the political careers of the Henrician fifth and sixth Earls, and the inability of the seventh to rouse his Northumbrian tenants for the 1569 revolt. The first Clifford Earl of Cumberland is seen doing Henry VIII's significant service during the Pilgrimage of Grace, only to be scurvily treated in the aftermath. Thomas Wharton rises on the ruins of Percy, Clifford and Dacre power. The book culminates in a hundred-page essay on "The Concept of Honour 1485-1642" - immensely rich, densely argued, demanding re-reading and lengthy consideration (and as illuminating for the fifteenth century as for later periods). The Essex rebellion is then examined as a coda, a case-study for the main theme. It

Buckles and bones

Christina Walkley

GALE OWEN-CROCKER
Dress in Anglo-Saxon England
214pp. Manchester University Press. £35.
0719018188

The student of post-medieval costume is faced with a plethora of literary and pictorial material as well as surviving garments, and a task of selection and interpretation. But further back in history the situation is very different. The evidence may consist solely of a brooch or pin, excavated in a grave-site, and its position in relation to the skeleton, which cannot always even be identified as male or female. With exceptional luck a tiny fragment of fabric may have survived, preserved by the oxidation of the metal to which it is attached. What are needed here are the skills of a detective, and these Gale Owen-Crocker possesses in abundance. For from this ostensibly inadequate material she has produced an extraordinarily detailed account of the dress of the Anglo-Saxons from the fifth to the eleventh centuries. Declaring war from the outset on the popular misconception of the Anglo-Saxons as in-

garters, the author sets out to reconstruct what men and women actually wore in the pagan fifth and sixth centuries, in the 300 years following the conversion to Christianity, and in the tenth and eleventh centuries. She has supplemented her study of the finds at over 1,100 grave-sites with detailed references to literature, both Anglo-Saxon and Latin, sculpture, illuminated manuscripts and embroidery, and she constantly evaluates her theories and conclusions in the light of contemporary evidence from the Continent and Scandinavia.

Archaeological evidence is strongest from the pagan period, owing to the custom of burying the dead with large quantities of grave-goods. From the, often matching, pairs of brooches found at the shoulders of female skeletons, and the buckle frequently found at the waist, she has reconstructed the characteristic garment of the period, the "peplos-type gown". This was an unshaped length of fabric, at the shoulders and leaving the arms exposed, with an optional belt or girdle at the waist over which more or less fabric could be plucked to vary the length. It was, she points out, an extremely flexible garment, which could readily be adapted to the different stages of pregnancy and breast-feeding, one or other of which must have been a virtually constant state for most

adult women. A chapter on textile production explains that, on the laborious warp-weighted looms of the time, it was expedient to weave fabric to the desired dimensions for each garment, thus eliminating wastage, obviating the necessity for cutting, and exploiting the decorative possibilities of tablet-woven selvages. Sewing was kept to a minimum: most garments were shaped by clasps or girdles and could thus serve several purposes, such as cloak and blanket.

Despite this rather primitive approach to tailoring, the Anglo-Saxons were a vain lot, and early graves have yielded combs, tweezers, and even cosmetic brushes. Archaeological finds from after the conversion are less productive, but there are richer literary sources and considerable cultural influence from Rome and Byzantium. It is clear that not everybody saw a link between Christianity and asceticism: in the eighth century St. Aldhelm had to rebuke his nuns for appropriating the expensive North African or Byzantine silks, imported for ecclesiastical vestments, and using them to make themselves showy garments.

This is a fascinating book, copiously illustrated with line drawings, on a hitherto neglected period of costume history. There is an appendix of Old English garment names, a full bibliography and an index.

down to the level of the village, accepted, modified or resisted. Such issues have been raised before with regard to the policing duties of the constables, but no previous historian has shown so well both the variety of ways in which the early modern state impinged upon the lives of villagers and the variability of local response. Particularly striking is her demonstration of the eventual resistance occasioned by the demands of Charles I. As the 1630s advanced men grew reluctant to serve as constable, JPs were obliged to intervene more frequently in their appointment, there was widespread refusal to assess or collect Ship Money, and default in meeting the military levies required in 1639-40. Here is thick evidence of a groundswell of popular hostility to Charles's government which, though Kent does not herself press the point, has considerable bearing on recent discussions of popular awareness of and participation in the conflicts which preceded the crisis of 1640.

Professor Kent has indeed succeeded in her attempt to provide a rounder and a fairer picture of England's village officers and the evidence which she presents carries the process of reappraisal far beyond what might have been expected. Dogberry, Dull and Elbow begin to look suspiciously like village Hampdens.

was the "last honour revolt", but on the scaffold Essex himself repudiated honour and "identified himself with the religio-providentialist view of the state on which the legitimacy of the Elizabethan regime had always rested". Some of his followers, however, foreshadowed the emerging seventeenth-century concept of resistance.

More tangential to the main theme is James's essay on "Obedience and Dissent" in the Lincolnshire rebellion of 1536, focusing on the behaviour of the gentry, but nevertheless seeking to differentiate this "regional dissident movement" from a "neo-feudal" revolt. The richly suggestive "Ritual, Drama and Social Body" is concerned with public religious imagery in towns, especially the Corpus Christi play; an affirmation of civic identity (hence the stress on "body"), falling into disfavour with the rise of the more effective expression of social wholeness provided by Protestant providentialism.

James's essays are subtly argued, replete with qualification; any summary gives much too crude an impression. There is a tendency to force the evidence (read coldly, the difference between Lord Dacre's funeral and Lord Wharton's seems insufficient to support the argument based on it). Historians will cavil at what is necessarily a highly subjective way of seeing English society, will wish to stress continuity rather than change, will pick away at the ragged ends. Nevertheless, they will find reading, meditating on, and arguing with this book immensely stimulating.

Barbara Harris's book on the third Stafford Duke of Buckingham, executed in 1521 for threatening to do to Henry VIII what his father would have liked to do to Richard III (ominously fingering his dagger), is a much more straightforward account. It deals with the Duke's estates, his household, his exercise of local political power, supplementing and sometimes taking issue with Carole Rawcliffe's more long-term study of the Stafford family. Harris examines Buckingham's trial at length, concluding that he was almost certainly guilty, although given the nature of the evidence against him (hearsay by dismissed servants), the proof of guilt would not have satisfied a modern court. She absolves Wolsey from pursuing a consistent policy of vendetta against the old nobility; but argues that both Henry VII and Henry VIII "harboured deep suspicion of the nobility", and that magnates found it difficult "to adapt to the new roles . . . as courtiers and servants of the crown". This is argued with rather less subtlety than the equivalent exposition of the dilemma facing the fifth Earl of Northumberland in James's book; and there is perhaps too crude a dichotomy between old and new nobility, or Yorkist and Tudor policies. Nevertheless, Miss Harris has provided a useful addition to the growing number of case-studies of the early Tudor nobility.



Andrew Sanders

CHARLES DICKENS
The Pickwick Papers: Edited by James Kinsley
898pp. Oxford University Press. £60.
0 19812631 X

To begin at the end. The text of *The Pickwick Papers* with which most readers are familiar concludes with the description of the "steady and reciprocal attachment" between Mr Pickwick and Sam Weller, "which nothing but death will terminate". It is a neat but open ending for a fiction, postponing a terminus while still giving us one. It is not the one that Dickens gave his first readers. The last phrase of the monthly part for November 1837 reads "which nothing but death will sever". It may be a less effective ending, but it stood for ten years until Dickens chose to revise the text of his novel for the Cheap Edition of 1847. It is by no means the only significant alteration that he made, as this magisterial addition to the Clarendon Dickens proves. On several occasions the seemingly mild-mannered Mr Wardle once resorted to "damme" and "damn that boy", expressions which were simply dropped by a novelist later determined to render his narrative more genteel. Clearly, though one gentleman in the story was originally allotted a blasphemy which must have come from raffish upper-class parlance but which proved too much for family readership: Lord Muntahed's "cynical me if the people didn't wish out of their cottages" is moderated to the weaker "confound me" in 1847.

James Kinsley notes some 1,000 substantive variants introduced by Dickens in his revisions of 1847 and 1867. Comparatively little of the holograph manuscript of the novel survives, but Kinsley was none the less able to draw on a great deal of valuable material in order to trace the development of Dickens's story from its unpromising beginnings as a prose accompaniment to Seymour's "Cockney sporting plates" to the various and fluid comic masterpiece that finally emerged. As his introduction reminds us, the sales of the monthly parts were phenomenal and the choice of serial publication

proved revolutionary in its popular success. There is much in this lucid introduction to delight readers long familiar with the novel, such as the note to Chapter Eleven referring to Pickwick's portrait "which he did not wish to have destroyed when he grew a few years older". This reference, omitted in 1867, was to the destruction of Maclise's 1836 portrait of the sly Sir John Soane, cut to shreds at the sinner's wish as it too faithfully depicted the ravages of old age. Professor Kinsley usefully includes the various Addresses to the Reader once appended to the monthly parts, the first of which notes the suicide of Seymour and the second the arrival of his unsuccessful replacement, Buss. This edition forms a fitting monument to Professor Kinsley, who died before he could see his work through the press.

A paperback edition of Dickens's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, which has eighteen complete chapters by Leon Garfield and illustrations by Antony Maitland, has recently been published (327pp. Deutsch. £5.95. 0 233 98829 0). The edition first appeared in 1980 and was reviewed in the TLS on October 3.

The Church superintendent

James K. Cameron

GORDON DONALDSON
Scottish Church History
238pp. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press.
£18.75.
0707303613
DAVID GEORGE MULLAN
Episcopacy in Scotland: The history of an idea
1560-1638
279pp. Edinburgh: John Donald. £25.
0859761509

The Reformation of the sixteenth century, unlike the movement for reform "in Head and Members" of the Church of the fifteenth century, called into question in many countries the retention of the historic episcopate. Nevertheless, the notion of *episcopacy*, usually called superintendence, remained in the mainstream of both Lutheran and Reformed Churches. In areas of limited geographical extent, which had a discernible urban centre, *episcopacy* tended to be either in the hands of the government of the community, as in Zurich and Basle, or, as in Strasbourg and Geneva, in the hands of a lawfully recognized ecclesiastical court, or courts, representative of that community. In larger geographical areas subject to a territorial prince or monarch, superintendence was most often exercised by individuals specially appointed for that purpose, as in Protestant parts of the Empire and in the Scandinavian countries.

In Scotland, where the Reformation came late in the day, and where the ruling powers in Church and State were actively hostile, the Reformation Church developed in the immediate pre-1560 period along Genevan lines, particularly in the east coast burghs. Thus, when the Protestant Revolution under the Lords of the Congregation obtained "legality" in 1560, there already existed urban centres - "the best reformed Churches" - from which it was originally intended superintendence would be exercised. This plan, envisaged by the authors of the "lost" "Book of Reformation", lies behind *The First Book of Discipline* as we know it today. In that work, revised and given a measure of political acceptance in January 1561, the earlier plans were redrawn and provision made for superintendents on whom the chief burden of *episcopacy* was to be placed. Two distinct methods of superintendence, one stemming from Geneva, and the other from Lutheran Churches, were grafted one upon the other and put into practice. The interpretation of this development, and in particular the ensuing struggles to obtain a settled polity for the Scottish Church, form the main subject of both Gordon Donaldson's collection of essays and David George Mullan's monograph.

In the interpretation of the polity of the Scottish Church, Professor Donaldson, Historiographer Royal in Scotland, has been one of the leading scholars, not only in his Birbeck Lectures, *The Scottish Reformation* (1960), but also in a large number of articles, some of which have now been gathered together in *Scottish Church History*. Because the main subject, episcopacy, has been of continuing interest and subjected to much recent research by himself and others - whose conclusions have in some measure diverged from his own - Donaldson has taken the opportunity "to amend them by correction and some expansion". This revision, he states, is "sometimes considerable", and there are in addition four articles which are "essentially new".

Readers will find much of interest in the early chapters on aspects of the development of the medieval Church, but will be disappointed that an essay which appeared in the *English Historical Review* in 1945, "The Scottish episcopate at the Reformation", has not been included. It is, however, to those chapters which deal with episcopacy in the late sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries that most readers will immediately turn. "The Example of Denmark in the Scottish Reformation", the title of which recalls a pioneer study in the *Scottish Historical Review*, is, as the author claims, "a new piece of work". It illustrates the diversity in the international background to the 1561 polity. The author now considers that the example of Denmark may also "have been in the minds of the Scots both when they completed the *Book of Discipline* and when they

arrived at the compromise that was necessary after that Book proved impracticable". The largely rewritten essay "Sources for Scottish Church History" provides Donaldson with an opportunity to examine yet again the question of bishops and superintendents, and to represent his earlier conclusions that Andrew Melville "was indeed an innovator in condemning the office of superintendent or bishop and advocating the transfer of power to presbyteries", and that it was "the bishops who maintained the convictions of the reformers". Professor Donaldson's approach to church history is dominated by his interest in administration, and he perhaps attaches too little importance to the more strictly theological understanding of reformed ecclesiology.

Episcopacy cannot be discussed adequately unless it is examined in its theological, ecclesiastical and political contexts. To part of this task Dr Mullan has directed his attention in *Episcopacy in Scotland: The history of an idea 1560-1638*, which is essentially a revision of his PhD thesis. At the outset he discusses the matter of "The Superintendency" and raises the question, "Are the superintendents to be regarded as new bishops?" A more fruitful approach might have been to ask how *The First Book of Discipline* intended superintendence to be exercised. Its authors undoubtedly believed that the Church possessed the right to

exercise superintendence, that it expected the active support of the civil authorities in putting that right into effect, and that it claimed to exercise the ultimate oversight over those to whom, however appointed, superintendence was entrusted. *The First Book of Discipline*, by advocating the appointment of individual ministers to a specific status and with responsibility for specified geographical areas, bestowed upon them the powers of superintendence which the Church possessed. These powers were from time to time more clearly defined by General Assemblies, which regularly called to account the five superintendents who were appointed, the few conforming bishops and those overseers or visitors to whom, in default of the appointment of a full complement of superintendents, they conveyed superintendence on an annual basis. Both Church and State put into the hands of individuals, who acted within a conciliar structure, powers of superintendence in order that the work of evangelization and the establishment of reformed parishes might be accomplished. These ends, rather than questions of episcopal "order", which for the most part had no relevance at this time in Protestantism, were uppermost in the minds of the reformers.

Mullan is right in concluding that "there is not one shred of evidence in *The Book of Discipline* that this office would at some unforeseen

date prove redundant and therefore without away". Yet there was always the possibility, with superintendence by individuals, that something of the old unsatisfactory conduct of episcopacy would return. If that happened, there would always be the possibility that the Church would seek to recover for itself, even by conflict, the right to determine the means of exercising *episcopacy* in some other, more acceptable way. That eventually is the story which Mullan recounts with fairness and refreshing detail. The failure of the so-called "Tulchan bishops" and of the episcopate to uphold the prescribed standards of superintendence, during the later stages of the reigns of James VI and Charles I, provided a substantial part of the basis for their rejection and gave added stimulus for the furtherance of Presbyterian ideas which had been developing among the reformed Churches of the Continent, especially those in France and the Netherlands. In the demise of the seventeenth-century Scottish episcopate, the bishops and their royal protagonists were themselves, as this study once more demonstrates, largely to blame. In asserting a conciliar form of superintendence the Church sought to maintain for itself at all levels of organization that freedom of assembly and self-determination which, as John Knox insisted to Lettington, they held to be inseparable from the Evangel.

both of whom were well aware that their talents would have been better employed away from the patriarchate, writing a book that adopts so consistently the perspective of the patriarchal chancery.

Hussey offers a bureaucrat's view of the Church; and Byzantine bureaucrats were notoriously indifferent to the life of the provinces. The iconoclast revival of the 820s and 830s is a striking illustration of how a policy might be accounted successful if applied in the capital, even if it was well known that the provinces were doing the opposite. But most Byzantines lived in villages, and our literary and archaeological sources are not so exigent that it would have been impossible to compose a chapter on rural Christianity (which is mentioned here only when it happens to nourish monks or heretics). Nor do we learn anything from Hussey about the accommodation of ecclesiastical structures to the widely varying ways of life and thought that prevailed within the empire. The nomads of the Pindus, to take an extreme example, did for the most part without churches, but not without Christianity. How this worked in practice is suggested by recent anthropological work on the region's nomads and transhumants, as in J. K. Campbell's *Honour, Family and Patronage* (1964). As for the large areas of the empire which were, at different times, more or less under Slav, Turkish or Frankish control, and so more or less pagan, Muslim or Latin, we learn a good deal from Hussey about relations between Greeks and Latins; but the conversion of the Slav invaders of the southern Balkans to Greek-speaking Christianity (without which there would scarcely be a Greek Orthodox Church today) is mentioned only in passing, while the gradual submergence of the Anatolian Church under Islam is passed over in inexplicable silence.

Hussey's indifference to the provinces, especially the oriental ones, means that the emperor's Armenian and Syrian subjects are reduced to walk-on parts. The Armenians in particular deserve better than this. Though there is no law against writing histories of Greek Orthodoxy, there ought to be one against its tacit identification with Byzantine Christianity. The history of iconoclasm, for example, has been much clarified by recent exploitation of oriental sources. If, like its German competitor, H. G. Beck's *Geschichte der Orthodoxen Kirche in Byzantinischen Reich* (1980), this book had begun with the Council of Chalcedon in 451, rather than with an unimpressive survey of seventh-century Christological controversies, we might have discovered why Hussey considers it sufficient to limit himself to the Greek dimension of Byzantine Christianity.

Indifference to the provinces could of course be justified as an authentically Byzantine point

of view. Not so Hussey's insistence on interpreting Byzantine church history in terms of "response" to a series of "challenges", primarily from the West. She herself concedes that most Byzantines despised and ignored the Franks, especially their culture; and it is only her preoccupation with ecclesiastical politics at the expense of ecclesiastical life and thought that allows her to find any "response" at all. The heartland of the empire was Anatolia, and contacts with Arabs and Turks were much more important than those with Latins. Even the eventual establishment of Frankish principalities in Greece and the Aegean left little mark compared to the much more extensive and sustained exposure of Hellenism to Arab and Turkish Islam. Hussey pushes her Western perspective to such lengths that she considers the deteriorating relations between Constantinople and Rome to have amounted eventually to an Orthodox schism - a throwback to the times when books used to be written on the events of 1054 under such give-away titles as *Le Schisme oriental* or *Le Schisme byzantin*.

Granted that the Byzantines were themselves at one stage much addicted to the writing of ecclesiastical histories, one is bound to ask why they gave the genre up just at the point in time where (as it happens) *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* begins. From Eusebius to Evagrius, a chain of Church historians traced the rise of Christianity, its adoption by the Roman State, its missions abroad and its domestic strife with heresy, all themes dear to Hussey. Some time after Justinian, though, the Byzantines themselves ceased to find these subjects worthy of separate treatment. The Church had overcome some of its adversaries, and resigned itself to the incurable error of others; while the Byzantine State's allegiance to Chalcedon seemed no longer in doubt. Not that heresy, missions and relations with the State ceased to be of interest. But the Church had reached maturity and had learned to know itself. Not even iconoclasm provoked a revival of ecclesiastical historiography as such. The measure of the mature Byzantine Christian mind, and its moulding of ordinary people's environment, thought, action and piety, is the missing dimension of this book. Professor Hussey recognizes that, even as the Byzantine State succumbed to the assault of the Turk and the indifference of the Frank, the Church was growing in authority and focusing on itself the allegiance of the Christian populations soon to be subdued. This was certainly no thanks to the antics of its hierarchs at the Council of Florence. The theme of this book is Church and State; but the essence of the Greek Christian experience from Byzantium to the present day has lain in the mutual identification of Church and people.

Of human frailty

Peter Reading

ALEXANDER KOHN
False Prophets
240pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £14.95.
0631146857

False Prophets is a wide-ranging, fascinating consideration of all aspects of falsification within the sciences, ancient and modern. Alexander Kohn classifies the various kinds of scientific untruthfulness, examines causes and motives, cites case-studies as disparate as "N-rays" and the verification techniques used on the Hitler Diaries, and assesses preventive measures.

Falseness can arise from profligate "foraging", the fabrication of experimental data never really collected; from "trimming", where real data are manipulated to better fit a scientist's purposes; or from "cooking", choosing only data that suit a researcher's hypothesis and rejecting or misrepresenting the rest. There can also be genuine error, and conclusions drawn from inadequate data. In the section "Did Newton Fudge His Data?", the great physicist's assumption of numerical values without substantiating data is defended by the author's opinion that "making mathematical approximations in an intractable problem is actually the best that can be done to show that a theory is feasible at all".

Chapters on specific cases of fraud stimulate social, political and philosophical, as well as scientific, ramifications. The alarming, sinister rise to fame and power of Lyenko, the Soviet agronomist, is a cautionary tale. His attempts to discredit, even annihilate, genetics in the Soviet Union won him predictable support from the Party. By dubbing geneticists "class enemies" he ingratiated himself with Stalin and instituted a programme of repression against

scientists infinitely more able than himself. At the Lenin Academy of Agricultural Sciences in 1948, the Lyenkoite Belensky announced: "No special hereditary substance exists any more than does the substance of combustion, phlogiston, or the substance of heat, caloric." The chilling chapter "How Safe Are Our Drugs?" emphasizes how falsification of data in the context of medicine can be more recognizably an ethical issue than in more arcane scientific areas - the use of thalidomide in the 1960s has resulted in 8,000 handicapped progeny in forty-six countries.

The famous *Eoanthropus dawsoni* (Piltdown Man) hoax is an obvious choice for inclusion. That the fusion of a human cranium and simian maxilla should have so fitted in with contemporary (1912) popular belief in a Darwinian "missing link" helps account for the forty-year longevity of the spoof.

Despite the maxim of Kenneth S. Norris of the University of California, "Science is a set of rules that keep the scientists from lying to each other", falsification does occur. Nor is the individual scientist always the culprit. Instances are given where, with misguided Jeeves-like loyalty to the boss, technicians tamper with experiments to guarantee the results anticipated by their masters. But the human frailties, desire for fame and/or fortune, are the main offenders. Kohn sympathetically observes that "It is often a matter of chance whether one remains unknown because of negative results, or wins acclaim for positive results. Rewards for industry, perseverance, imagination and intelligence are often accidental...". The scientific community ostracizes its members found perpetrating fraud; Professor Kohn's positive, benign, proposed prophylactic is "the creation of an atmosphere in science that would reduce the temptation to fraud, that would take care of a more honest distribution of credits, reduce the number of vanity press journals and raise research standards".

Of the laws of nature

Lary Shaffer

SHARON E. KINGSLAND
Modelling Nature: Episodes in the history of population ecology
267pp. University of Chicago Press. £23.50.
0226437264

Sharon E. Kingsland gives the impression that she has arbitrarily chosen to follow only one thread through the history of population ecology. The book is organized around biographical sketches of a series of prominent biologists and mathematicians from the turn of the century to the 1960s. The scientists are vividly portrayed and the role of the university as a setting for the development of population ecology is carefully explored. But the book is much less lucid in presenting the growth and development of the central ideas of population ecology itself.

Early ecology was thought of as the applied side of biology. Research funds were available to study agricultural pests - and the ecologists wanted to study those species, anyway, because the short generation times of pest organisms allowed them to study dramatic fluctuations in population numbers. Population ecologists endeavoured to describe these changes from generation to generation and to find their causes. But beyond the solution of agricultural problems, the early population ecologists had more lofty goals. They wished, simply, to find the laws of nature, although it soon became clear that this would be an impossible task because each component of the ecological system was linked to every other part, and it was impossible to understand any part without understanding the whole.

This enterprise, with its roots in concrete battles (such as damage done to cereals by flour beetles), attracted a highly diverse group of people, many of whom had little background in biology. The common thread that tied the population ecologists together was mathematics. Even the naturalists working in the field seem to have felt that the study of animals in their natural habitats was a second-class activity when

compared to making mathematical predictions about future population levels. The naturalists worshipped at the altar of mathematics, even though the mathematics were sometimes too difficult to understand. Charles Elton, the ecologist, said of Lotka, the mathematician, "Like most mathematicians, he takes the hopeful biologist to the edge of a pond, points out that a good swim will help his work, and then pushes him in and leaves him to drown."

Although Kingsland's description of the scientific issues is obscure, her account of the workings of science is worthwhile. Raymond Pearl was a powerful force within population ecology. He founded two professional journals and became Professor of Biology in the Medical School at Johns Hopkins. In the 1920s he was seeking a law which would guide research and theory in population ecology and he believed that he had found it in a single equation which was used to describe the growth of populations. The story of Pearl's fixation on this equation provides one of the best stories in this book.

Research undertaken to support Pearl's contention took the form of fitting results of the growth of actual populations to the so-called logistic curve, which was a graph of Pearl's equation. The data from real populations did not, of course, fall directly on the hypothetical line of the logistic curve, so a judgment had to be made as to whether the correspondence between the two was sufficient for the curve to be considered a law of nature rather than a mere mathematical abstraction. The extent to which different scientists considered the curve to be a law depended greatly upon what they believed before collecting their data, and upon their need to be published in journals controlled by Pearl.

Accounts of this sort of scientific infighting lead to two important conclusions: first, it is difficult to find support for the popular view of science as an objective enterprise which seeks the truth - scientists seem to see what they expect to see and discover what they already know; and second, success in science is dependent upon knowing the right people and being in the right place at the right time.

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J. R. C. Leach TLS 8th August 1986

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0002198177
144pp each. Collins. £9.95 each.

The packagers of these four volumes have kept, as far as possible, to the popular and successful format they achieved with George Allen and Unwin's *Encyclopaedia of Mammals* series: combining an authoritative text by teams of "experts" with skilful artwork and outstanding photography. The results are not really encyclopaedias at all, but rather introductory textbooks containing large quantities of eye-catching and, occasionally, distracting visual aids. Each volume concentrates on a different aspect of animals: how they evolved, how they behave, how they interact with their environment to produce ecosystems, and how they actually work at the level of organs and cells.

Each has its merits and its shortcomings. The *Encyclopaedia of Animal Evolution*, edited by R. J. Berry and A. Hallam, begins with a concise palaeontological history of the world, which is marred only by its sketchy and unimaginative artwork (a pity, since the subject of extinct animals and dinosaurs is surely one to inspire any scientific illustrator). This is followed by a series of informative, though somewhat disorganized, chapters dealing with a variety of evolutionary topics: ranging from the history of Darwinism to the evolution of *Homo sapiens*. The treatment of the latter, unfortunately, is perfunctory and over-decorated with the usual, speculative reconstructions of hirsute, beetle-browed ancestors. The book concludes with a carefully worded debate on evolutionary controversies, in which, happily, creationism is given short shrift. The contributors to this volume have avoided the temptation to talk down to their readers. As a result, the text is relatively technical in parts, but still readable, and, like fossil-bearing strata, nicely punctuated with arcane facts. It was pleasant to learn, for example, that modern equivalents of Precambrian bacteria have turned up "in wine-soaked soil beneath a wall of Harlech castle", quite apart from what this tells us about the men of Harlech or the nature of the primordial slime.

Peter Slater's *Encyclopedia of Animal Behaviour* is thorough, well illustrated and, on the whole, well written. Its overall structure, however, is haphazard. The early sections on the history of ethology, its applications to pest control and animal husbandry, and its relevance to human behaviour are non-sequiturs. Similarly, the chapter entitled "The Origins of Behaviour", which one would expect to find near the beginning, is sandwiched, for no obvious reason, between one on animal relationships and another on social organization. There are also some unnecessary contradictions in the text. In one section we are told, for instance, that "animals rarely fight to the death", and in another that "animals fight a great deal and it is quite common... to see one kill another". It is also disturbing to find the occasional Lorenzian myth still alive and kicking: the "expert" who wrote that submissive dogs "expose the neck as if to invite the victor to despatch them" ought, by now, to know better.

Peter Moore is more successful in organizing his *Encyclopedia of Animal Ecology*, outlining the basic principles at the beginning and then describing, in varying detail, each of the world's ecologically distinct regions or "biomes". The final chapter, on man's impact on nature, forms a nice conclusion, although the impact of conservation surely deserves more than three pages. Regrettably, the over-use of decorative boxes to improve the text and many of the explanatory diagrams are too small and confusing to be informative. Occasionally they are misleading. One well-chosen illustration

the recycling of ecological resources, for example, seems to imply that clouds are formed exclusively from sea-spray and dust. The authors have also run into problems when trying to compress each of the world's biomes into a few pages. The section on rain forest, for instance, leaves the reader with an impression of Asian leopards leaping on to the backs of South American peccaries, and so on.

R. McNeill Alexander's *Encyclopedia of Animal Biology* is the most technical volume of the four, and uninitiated readers will have problems understanding some of it. Nevertheless, as a textbook it is detailed and informative, apart from the section on reproduction and development, which contains anomalies. Here we are told that most baby animals die because they have the "wrong" genetics - a highly debatable point - and that human males "produce 100,000,000,000 times too many sperms". Too many for what, one wonders? There is also something curiously puritanical about this final chapter. While recognizing that this is a family book, it is difficult to see the justification for devoting only eleven lines to the subject of copulation, or for providing detailed and elaborate diagrams of digestive, locomotory, sensory, excretory, circulatory and respiratory organs, when there is no corresponding illustration of the reproductive organs of any species, not even a mollusc. If a person is old enough to grapple with the process of gas exchange in lungs, then surely they can also confront the mechanics of sex.

Judging jizz

Euan Dunn

PETER HAYMAN, JOHN MARCHANT and TONY PRATER
Shorebirds: An identification guide to the waders of the world
412pp. Croom Helm. £19.95.
0709920342

Shorebirds, otherwise known as waders, are the long-legged and often long-billed birds (excluding herons) with tundra colours and piping calls that haunt our mudflats and shallows. Worldwide there are 214 species belonging to nine families. In recent years, shorebirds have attracted increasing attention from conservationists and birdwatchers. To the first, they are potential frontline casualties in the battle to protect estuaries, coasts and freshwater marshes from a plethora of development ranging from leisure marinas to tidal-power barrage

Social sets

Tim Halliday

BETTYANN KEYLES
Females of the the Species: Sex and survival in the animal kingdom
270pp. Harvard University Press. £16.95.
0674 298659

Identifying the biological needs of females is central to understanding the evolutionary basis of animal social systems. This is because females, having a much more limited reproductive potential than males, are commonly a scarce resource for which males must compete. In many species, males fight to obtain territories which are then inspected by females to assess the extent to which they will fulfil the food requirements of their developing young. In others, females require only sperm from males and competition is for the possession of females, not of a territory. Such common phenomena serve to maintain prevailing sexual stereotypes, the aggressive, strutting male and the demure, docile female. There are, however, numerous examples of animals in which these sex roles are reversed. Hyenas live in a matriarchal society in which females are larger than and dominant over males and exercise a firm control over the behaviour of members of a group; the polyandrous female peafowl, a bird that runs about on its own, is larger than her mates, each of which dutifully guards a nest and rears a clutch of young for her. These and many other examples have been the subject of intense research in the past twenty years

Prettyish pests

Mark Ridley

BARRY GOATER
British Pyralid Moths: A guide to their identification
175pp. Harley Books, Martins, Great Horkeley, Colchester, Essex CO6 4AH.
£18.95.
0946589 089

The pyralid moths are one of the lesser-known families of British Lepidoptera. Barry Goater hopes the defects of our knowledge will be supplied before "the appropriate volume of *The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland* comes to be written". That gives us plenty of time: the pyralid volume is scheduled last in that great eleven-volume work, which suggests a publication date in the next century. Goater has aimed to make it easier to study the group by producing, as his subtitle suggests, what is essentially an identification guide. His book is indeed most welcome, for it has no competitor and is excellent of its kind. It illustrates, in colour photographs, the adults of all 208 British pyralids; it also describes them and includes line-drawings of parts that help in identification. It does not provide keys, or offer a guide to the caterpillars.

The pyralids are commoner in the tropics than in Britain; but the British list contains many species that are attractive, curious, or

schemes. To the birdwatcher, however experienced, they pose thorny identification problems, the more so because their prodigious capacity for migration means that any one of a host of species, perhaps distinguishable only by the pattern of flecking on the shoulder or the merest webbing between the toes, may put in an unscheduled appearance at a site hundreds or thousands of miles from its usual flyway. Special difficulties are presented by the plover family (sixty-five species worldwide) and sandpipers (eighty-eight species): indeed, the ability to tease apart the look-alike *Callidris* sandpipers (affectionately known as "peeps" in North America and "stints" in Britain) is a *sine qua non* for serious birdwatchers.

Hitherto there has been no international synthesis of the world's waders to satisfy the growth of co-operative research or the insatiable appetite of birdwatchers for new horizons to explore. The advent of *Shorebirds* fills the niche with distinction and, with its sister

and it is this rich fund of new information that provides the material for Bettyann Keyles's book.

Keyles's professed aim is to concentrate on the role of females in the social systems of animals and there is indeed a strong case to be made that this is a neglected topic. Biologists have tended to concentrate on male behaviour, largely because it is more elaborate and conspicuous than that of females. Moreover, it has proved very difficult to identify precisely how females choose their mates, for example, because variations in female behaviour are typically much more subtle than those shown by males. It is also the case that the great majority of researchers in this field are men, and, however objective they may try to be, it is probable that they bring a masculine bias to the kinds of questions they investigate and the observations that they make. Keyles does not develop these themes, however, but takes the reader through a seemingly endless succession of examples and anecdotes. The breathless intensity of her account leaves one longing for some kind of synthesis, some more reflective passages where the significance of the accumulated information is assessed and evaluated.

As a source of interesting stories, and as an account of the richness and variety of animal social systems, this is an excellent book. It fails, however, to live up to the expectation raised by its title. It is not really a book about females, or about their critical role in the social dynamics of animal societies, an important theme that keeps being side-tracked in the author's rush to describe the next example.

economically influential. Perhaps too many of them are small, dull brown moths, but the beautiful china-mark, which is common near water, has "forewings shining white, with delicately pencilled brown cross-lines" and the thistle ermine (whose caterpillars live on thistles) has wings of "glossy silvery white, sparsely coloured with black dots, those nearer base of wing being the larger". Both these species should satisfy the aesthetes. Others might be more controversial. *Pyrusta naura* has "forewing deep purple, suffused blackish; a round golden spot in post-median region" - a colour combination that has been judged vulgar, but seems to work quite well here, provided the markings done in gold don't become too fragmented and disorganized.

The worst pests are the several species whose caterpillars live on stored products. The mealmoth, whose adult is strangely coloured in several different shades of brown, lives on stored grain. And the caterpillar of the famous flour moth *Ephesia kuehniella* on wheat flour and can make a frightful nuisance of itself in flour mills, "clogging machinery with masses of silken, frass-filled galleries and webs". I might only remark that the natural history of these pest species is all too well known, and it is more often against the naive and harmless species that Goater has to write "biology apparently unknown". Let us hope that bleak entry will be less common in the more comprehensive work to come. If it is, we shall have Barry Goater to thank.

volume *Seabirds* (by Peter Harrison), is helping to shape a new generation of field-manuals. The detailed information brought to bear on the identification of age, sex, racial and seasonal variation for a given species, along with distribution maps and life-histories (voice, habits, migrations) make this more a reference handbook than a field-guide. The text by John Marchant and Tony Prater addresses a remarkable portfolio of eighty-eight colour plates by Peter Hayman, portraying in over 1,800 illustrations all the shorebirds in their various plumage aspects.

The quality of illustration represents a boldly imaginative response to the recognition of that elusive term "jizz", recently defined (in *American Birds*) as everything about the bird that cannot be completely described, but that aids in identification - an amalgam of character, personality, *Gestalt*, essence. It is this "feel" of the bird that the better field-guide should convey. There are obvious limits to what a static, two-dimensional image can offer, but Hayman breaks new ground in his radical and painstaking amalgam of art and science. By incorporating some fifty standard measurements, made from flexible reference skins, into his flying birds, and some thirty for the perched studies, he reveals exact proportions that the eyes see only fleetingly. Anything inherently mechanistic in this approach is transcended by great subtlety of brushwork, and the end result is as beautiful as it is reliable.

Some of the rarer species have never been illustrated before, and *Shorebirds* plays a valuable role in drawing attention to them. Indeed the book could launch a score of intriguing expeditions. Who, for example, will find the unknown breeding grounds of Cox's sandpiper, and will anyone unearth the Obi woodcock of the Moluccas, not seen since 1902 and known from only five specimens?

Shorebirds was published just in time to include the resurrection of Jerdon's courser, which had not been recorded this century until rediscovered in Andhra Pradesh in January 1986. And the authors make a number of other late inclusions in a special appendix. To this list might be added that Common snipe is a resident breeder on the Azores and that, contrary to the indications of the map, Curlew sandpipers reach the Gulf of Guinea coast in large numbers in winter. Also, though presumed by the authors not to build its own free nest (of twigs, moss and lichens), the Spotted greenshank does, somewhat unexpectedly, undertake the task itself.

These are minor errors in a work of great scope, scholarship, and aesthetic appeal. *Shorebirds* will be an indispensable tool of the wader-watcher for years to come.

Record writer

Alan Bell

DAVID THOMAS and JOYCE THOMAS
Compton Mackenzie: A bibliography
309pp. Mansell. £40.
07201 18174

The long and very productive creative career of Sir Compton Mackenzie makes him an obvious candidate for a comprehensive bibliography, and it is possible even from the compilation by David Thomas and Joyce Thomas to chart his progress as a one-man literary industry. There are peaks of early success (such as the sale of 35,000 copies of *Sinister Street* claimed for its first four months of publication in 1913), and low patches when pot-boiling and business history took over for a period, redeemed in the end by the ten "octaves" of his autobiography, published to some acclaim from 1963 onwards. His massive contribution to the early volumes of *The Gramophone* needed to be systematically recorded, as did his huge output in sound and television broadcasting: the BBC Sound Archives have produced no less than 534 en-

tries for David and Joyce Thomas's catalogue. The "by the same author" list facing each of Compton Mackenzie's title-pages grew longer year by year, with a range including children's stories and books about cats, whose full extent is known only to specialists. This enormous body of work deserved full treatment, not least as a phenomenon of intense writing activity.

Unfortunately *Compton Mackenzie: A bibliography* is so seriously flawed by inconsistencies, inaccuracies and inadequacies of research as to make it no more than a foundation for subsequent work, especially as concerns books and contributions to periodicals. It appears to have been compiled mainly in Birmingham, using inter-library loan facilities, and no inspection of the main collections in Scotland is declared; even the Mackenzie archives in Austin, Texas, are reported from a copy of the typed catalogue. Journals as common as the *Oxford Magazine* and *Isis* are reported as "unused".

One is put on guard by noticing that *The New Decameron* (1922) is recorded as published by "Basil Blackwood [for "Blackwell"] Oxford", and it seems odd that four poems by Mackenzie

appear in *An Anthology of Modern Catholic Prose* (1931), until consultation of any large library catalogue, let alone the book itself, reveals that the anthology is of *Catholic Poetry*. Such errors abound, and the text seems scarcely to have been proof-read. We learn of Harold Nicholson and Virginia Wolff, of Ian "Wilkinson" (for Willson) as the editor of the modern volume of the *New Cambridge Bibliography*. There are rewards, however, as we are told that Mackenzie "induged in Scottish Nationalism", surely a pleasing neologism to be added to the *Scottish National Dictionary* supplement.

Archives Taylor's *Book catalogues: Their varieties and uses*, first published in 1957, has been reprinted, with a new introduction, addenda and corrigenda by William P. Barlow Jr (284pp. Winchester: St Paul's Bibliographies. £22. 0 906795 28 1). Its TLS reviewer hailed it as a massive, if austere, contribution to scholarship; his prophecy, that the book would become ever more useful, has been amply fulfilled, as it has become ever more scarce in the second-hand trade.

Physical sciences

Foundations, William The Recursive Universe: Cosmic complexity and the limits of scientific knowledge (1st pub. in US 1985)
Oxford UP. 252pp. £5.95 (paperback). 0 19 28173 X. 2/1/87.

Poetry

Cheung, Dominic, editor and translator *The Isle Full of Noise: Modern Chinese poetry from Taiwan* (Modern Asian Literature Series)
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Politics

Bridges, Brian Korea and the West (Chatham House Papers, 33)
Royal Institute of International Affairs/Routledge and Kegan Paul. 101pp. £5.95 (paperback). 0 7102 1110 4. 11/12/86.
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Goodman, David S.G., Martin Lockett and Gerald Segal *The China Challenge: Adjustment and reform* (Chatham House Papers, 32)
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New York: Lamp. 335pp. £39. 0 8204 0274 5. 1/2/87.
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Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP. 343pp. £32.95. 0 8014 1952 2. 15/12/86.

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Blanchi, Susanne M., and Daphne Spain *American Women in Transition*
New York: Russell Sage Foundation, distr. by New York: Basic Books. 280pp. £32.50 (hardcover), £14.95 (paperback). 0 8134 1111 4 (hc), 0 8134 112 3 (pb). 2/1/87.
Burlingame, Robert, and Odel Thomas, editors *Stridings of Culture: Essays from the Dallas Institute*
Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, UK distr. Shephardson: Blackwell Books. 250pp. £19.50 (paperback). 0 91005 07 3. 15/1/87.
Haglund, Ralph *The Swiss Way of Warfare: Lessons for the western world*
New York: Praeger, UK distr. Wadsworth. 203pp. £35.95. 0 03 06493 6.

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*Beijing: Panda, distr. by Beijing: China International Book Trading Corporation. 220pp. (paperback). 0 8351 1607 7. Zhang Jie, translated by Gladys Yang *Love Must Not Be Forgotten*
*Beijing: Panda, distr. by Beijing: China International Book Trading Corporation. 227pp. (paperback). 0 8351 1337 X.**

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Pym, Stephen J. *The Ice: A Journey to Antarctica*
Iowa City: Iowa UP. 428pp. £37.50. 0 8745 152 4.

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De Grand, Alexander J. *In Stalin's Shadow: Angelo Tasso and the crisis of the left in Italy and France, 1910-1945*
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Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, distr. by Guildford: Columbia UP. 673pp. \$60. 0 88033 106 2. 12/12/86.
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Stevens: SPA. 239pp. 0 907590 06 3.

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Edm. Tre. 122pp., illus. £5.95. 0 241 11893 X.

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Schickel, Phil, and Penelope Ormer *Ormer, foreword by John Jackson King Remembered*
Norfolk: 303pp. £16/£22.50. 0 393 02256 0. 1/1/87.

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Andrews, David, and John Kept *The Hidden Manager: Communication technology and information networks in business organizations*
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Fenny, Mary, editor *New Methods and Techniques for Information Management (Scholarly Communications Outlook)*
Taylor Graham. 364pp. £25/£40 (paperback). 0 90758 12 3. 12/86.

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La, Deepak, and Martin Wolf, editors *Stagflation, Savings, and the State: Perspectives on the global economy (A World Bank Research Publication)*
Oxford UP. 402pp. £26.50. 0 19 520496 4. 13/1/86.
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London: Wheatsheaf. 264pp. £20 (hardcover), £7.95 (paperback). 0 7430 0241 2 (hc), 0 7430 0242 0 (pb). 1/1/86.

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London: 238pp., £4.95 (paperback). 0 7012 0689 0. 2/87.
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INDEX OF BOOKS REVIEWED

Alexander, R. McNeill. The Collins Encyclopedia of Animal Biology 70
Arnheim, Rudolf. New Essays on the Psychology of Art 59
Behar, Ruth. Santa María del Monte 64
Berry, R. J., and A. Hallam. The Collins Encyclopedia of Animal Evolution 70
Boyle, Nicholas, and Martin Swales (Editors). Realism in European Literature 63
Bradley, David. The Chaneyville Incident 56
Candwell, Christopher. Scenes and Actions: Unpublished manuscripts. Collected Poems 1924-1936 63
Carnford, John. Collected Writings 63
Cotwell, Michael. The Companion to "Our Mutual Friend" 66
Cunningham, Valentine (Editor). Spanish Front: Writers on the Civil War 63
del Castillo, Michel. The Disinherited 64
Devlin, Anne. The Way-Paver 56
Dickens, Charles. The Pickwick Papers 66
Donaldson, Gordon. Scottish Church History 68
Drysdale, Helena. Alone through China and Tibet 57
Eames, Andrew. Crossing the Shadow Line 57
Engelberg, Ernst. Bismarck, Urpreuss and Reichsgründer 53
Foley, Barbara. Telling the Truth 65
Fraser, Alexander. Beyond the Blue Horizon 57
Frow, John. Marxism and Literary History 65
Goater, Barry. British Pyralid Moths 70
Hanson, Joseph. Beggar Your Neighbours 54
Harris, Barbara J. Edward Stafford, Third Duke of Buckingham, 1478-1521 67
Hayman, Peter, John Marchant and Tony Prater. Shorebirds 70
Himes, Chester. Lonely Crusade 56
Hogrefe, Jeffrey. "Wholly Unacceptable" 58
Hussey, J. M. The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire 68
Jacobson, Wendy S. The Companion to "The Mystery of Edwin Drood" 66
James, Mervyn. Society, Politics and Culture 67
Kent, Joan R. The English Village Constable 1580-1642: A social and administrative study 67
Kevles, Bettyann. Females of the Species 70
Kingsland, Sharon E. Modelling Nature 69
Kohn, Alexander. False Prophets 69
Kundera, Milan. Life is Elsewhere 55
Lee, Peter. Guard Her Children 54
Lowe, John. Into China 57
McQuillan, Mollam. Impressionist Portraits 59
Moore, Peter D. The Collins Encyclopedia of Animal Ecology 70
Mullan, David George. Episcopacy in Scotland 68
Nabokov, Vladimir. The Enchanter 55
Neuhaus, Richard John. Dispensations 54
Nora, Pierre (Editor). Les Lieux de mémoire: Volume One, La République; Volumes Two to Four, La Nation 51
Oates, Joyce Carol. Mary: A life 55
Ortas, F. M. The Last Pharaoh 64
Over-Crocker, Gale. Dress in Anglo-Saxon England 67
Pal, Pratapaditya, and Vidya Dehejia. From Merchants to Emperors 59
Roth, Joseph. Hotel Savoy 56
Schiffeld, Mary Anne, and Cecilia Mochel (Editors). Fetter'd or Free? 66
Slater, Peter J. B. The Collins Encyclopedia of Animal Behaviour 70
Thomas, David, and Joyce Thomas. Compton Mackenzie: A bibliography 71
Thompson, John A. Manual of Curatorship 58
Wideman, John Edgar. A Glance Away 56

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